Interview with Mr. Leon Weintraub

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

LEON WEINTRAUB

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is the sixth of July, 2005. This is an interview with Leon Weintraub. What does Weintraub mean? Traub I always think is a pigeon or something or a dog or something.

WEINTRAUB: Actually, it's- I don't speak German but I understand it means wine grape.

Q: Wine grape. Yes. Alright, well let's first, let's sort of get at the beginning. When and where were you born?

WEINTRAUB: I was born in New York City, May 18, 1942.

Q: Alright. Can you tell me first sort of on the father's side, what you know about the Weintraubs on their side and then we'll do your mother's side.

WEINTRAUB: Best I can tell is that my father's father, my grandfather, emigrated to the United States, maybe as a teenager from what we understand from the little family history that was passed down. His parents were divorced.

Q: Where did they come from?

WEINTRAUB: That's tough to sawe're really not sure. We've had little snippets of family history. We think it was somewhere in southern Poland. We think we may have it down to a village with a name that sounds like “Striziv,” or an area, but we're really not sure; there's really not much in the way of documents that can support that. And his [my grandfather Samuel Weintraub's] mother remarried and I guess he didn't get along with his stepfather or his mother's new husband. So as a teenager he came over probably in the 1880s. We have heard from my father how his father managed in the big blizzard in New York City which I think it was 1888-

Q: I think it was '88, yes, that was that tremendous blizzard, buried the city.

WEINTRAUB: Right. How he somehow, he managed to survive that period therit must have been very difficult. I recall hearing from my father how his father was a young street peddler at the time and was sleeping in a pushcart during the snowstorm. Then he met his future wife in the United States [or he may have met her parents on the ship coming over] and was married. As a matter of fact, I have a copy of the invitation to their wedding; he was married in New York City in 1899. And he was always a laborer of one kind or another. I have a picture of him working for the subway of New York City at one point. And he and my grandmother had a total of eight children. And there's one surviving child left of those, one of my aunts, a sister of my father (Hilda Meyerson), who actually just last month had her 100th birthday, living in Florida now. My father passed away quite a number of years ago as well as the remaining siblings in the family. And he lived in New York City all his life. I was raised in Brooklyn, New York City. Is that enough? Should I go to my mother's side?

Q: Now, what did your father do?

WEINTRAUB: My father was also a working man all of his life. When I was growing up in Brooklyn he was a salesman in retail, first in fruit and vegetable stores, fresh produce, and then a fish store; he used to go to the Fulton Fish Market once a week to pick up fresh

fish. That was quite an adventure for me at one point, when I was able to accompany him. Getting up early to go with my dad on the truck to the Fulton Fish Market, pick out the fresh fish and engage in the usual banter with all of his friends there that he knethat was a great trip for a kid.

And then at one point, after I was in my twenties and had moved away to graduate school, that type of work had just become too physically demanding, working with big boxes of fish loaded with ice, your hands would get sliced up as you tried to filet the fish and cut the fish. At the age of, I think he must have been around 58, I think, he asked around about less physically demanding work (he had a brother-in-law who worked for the New York City Parks Department) and he took the test and he became a bus driver for the city of New York. So he had a new path and he worked there until he retired; he worked about seven years as a bus driver for the city of New York until he retired at 65.

Q: Well now, on your mother's side, what do you know about her?

WEINTRAUB: Very different family. My mother's family came from Greece, quite well documented, from a town in the northwest of Greece not far from the Adriatic, not far from the border with Albania, by the name of Ioannina. And her parents emigrated to the United States around- in the late 1890s. She had older siblings who were born in Greece; she herself was born in New York City and her family lived in various areas of Manhattan and Brooklyn and then eventually they settled, her family settled, across the street from where my father's family had been living. So they met as youngsters or as teenagers in New York City, both born in 1910. They were married in 1935. My father was a little bit old for the Second World War but he did serve, of course, he was drafted. He served in the Navy. He served on a Liberty ship. He never got overseas but he got down to Florida, went through the Panama Canal and on to the West Coast to Monterrey so he served in the Service for a couple of years. But he was the, as he used to recount, he was kind of the old timer. Apart from the officers, among the conscripted men, the enlisted men, he was the old timer, but you know, he managed to get out alright.

My mother's family remained very attached to their Greek heritage, unlike my father's family. My father's family carried with them a history of a lot of discrimination, anti-Semitism in Poland, so my father and his siblings and my grandfather never spoke much about where they came from. But as a matter of fact my mother's family had very fond memories of growing up and living in Greece.

Q: What type of work or business on your mother's side?

WEINTRAUB: Her father, I think, was in some kind of manufacturing, light manufacturing, in New York City. As a matter of fact, he was quite a philanthropist and with others he founded a synagogue in lower Manhattan particular to the ritual practices of the Jewish people of Ioannina, which is a distinct offshoot, if you will, of certain of the religious practices. The group is known as Romaniote Jews.

Q: So, on the Greek side there came Greek Jewish heritage?

WEINTRAUB: Yes.

Q: Because I was going to say that I served for four years in Greece and you know, I watched the Greek emigration and all and Greeks don't marry anybody but Greeks, you know.

WEINTRAUB: Of course.

Q: Did this cause any- did you feel any problem within the family between sort of the Polish Jewish side and the Greek Jewish side?

WEINTRAUB: Actually it was very interesting because it was really a process of merging very different types of cultures. From the family history the story goes that my father's father, my grandfather on my father's side, just found it hard to believe that this other family who lived across the street from him was a Jewish family because their rituals,

their behavior was very different. Of course, they both did come from fairly orthodox backgrounds. The Greek family, however, smoked on the Sabbath; they had other little practices, such as drinking cups of thick Turkish coffee, and they didn't speak Yiddish.

Of course, all the Jews coming from Eastern Europe spoke Yiddish as a lingua franca. The Jews from Ioannina, on the other hand, were not Sephardic Jews as were found in Athens or Thessaloniki, but were called Romaniote, and they spoke Greek - not, I don't think, a cultured Greek, but they did speak a Greek among themselves. By comparison, the Sephardic Jews mainly spoke Ladino, which was a mixture of Spanish and Hebrew and other languages. Anyway, so apparently it was quite an educational experience, if you will, on both sides. But there was never any serious issue about it. And of course, to this day, when I meet new people, they might ask me, with my name, well, do you speak any Yiddish? If both my parents had been from that common background, probably I would have picked up a little bit in the home but of course my mother's family didn't speak Yiddish at all, so the only language my parents had in common was English.

Q: Well, how Jewish bringing up was your family?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, quite, quite Jewish. We did keep a kosher home. And we certainly observed all the holidays. But it was pretty kind of traditional. If you read any memoirs of growing up in Brooklyn in the 1950s, of which there have been a number, it's fairly typical, typical of the time, you know. Local elementary school, local high school, and a Hebrew school after public school hours for bar-mitzvah preparation.

Q: Well now, were your, was your family able to find a synagogue that fit both sides?

WEINTRAUB: Well, again, in that generation, and with both families from the orthodox variant of religious observance, women really didn't have a strong role in services, so the synagogue we went to, in fact, was of the Eastern European variation that my father preferred. And my mother, in fact, would not regularly attend services, which seemed to be the norm for women of her background and upbringing. But, of course, there were

occasions when we would go to another synagogue of the Romaniote type if there was an occasion on my mother's side of the family and the services and chanting would be very different. So I grew up being quite familiar with two quite different variations in ritual practices of singing or chanting and I could accept both of them as being equally valid. Even to this day, when I meet people who have grown up with just one variant they think, that's it, and anything else is somehow out of the ordinary. That was unfortunate.

Q: It's fascinating.

Did you ever look into how that Jewish group ended up, not being of Ladino origin in Ioannina?

WEINTRAUB: Well, as a matter of fact, there is some history there. It may be more myths and legends, but there is a story. As a matter of fact, there is this synagogue that my grandfather, my mother's father, founded on the lower east side of New York. It is still in existence and is being refurbished, being restored now. And there's a little museum on the second floor. I actually have a number of cousins active in that project. Like my father, my mother also was from a family of eight siblings; I have a number of cousins still living in New York City who are very active in the restoration of the synagogue. I believe that the most widely accepted story, although I don't know how authentic it is, is that these Jews were being transported as slaves from Israel to Rome after the destruction of the second temple, and apparently the ship foundered somewhere in the Adriatic between Israel and Italy and Rome. Somehow a number of survivors managed to make it to the shore, the Adriatic shore of Greece, and eventually settled, and hence the name of this group called Romaniote. And that would explain, of course, why there's no Ladino connection; they're not a part of that huge migration out of Spain in 1492.

Q: Well, how about as a kid growing up? Of course, you have brothers and sisters.

WEINTRAUB: I have one older sister. She's four years older than me, living in Michigan right now.

Q: What was family life like? I'm talking about, you know, at home as a kid?

WEINTRAUB: Well, it was, you know, life in the 1950s of a working class family in Brooklyn. There's an old line from a popular comedian of that generation, named Sam Levinson. He was quite a popular comedian in the 1950s, and we could say, in his words, that “we were poor but we didn't know it.” It was that kind of thing. Obviously, American society was not as wealthy as it is now. People didn't have the same aspirations, so you didn't feel necessarily deprived if you didn't have great material wealth. Obviously there were always models of people who had more, but you didn't have the constant bombardment of advertising on radio or television or film so we never felt necessarily deprived. For example, both my sister and I went to a local college, Brooklyn College. I mean the thought of going to an out of town college and living away from home was just not on the agenda for us, so it just never entered our consciousness that I was deprived by not going. It just wasn't in the matrix. We went to public high schools and a public university, Brooklyn College. We took modest family vacations, never flew anywhere, it was always driving to somewhere for vacations.

Q: Did you go up to the Catskills? c WEINTRAUB: Oh, certainly we went to the Catskills, both my sister and I went to camp in the Catskills; and we occasionally spent some weeks as a family in the Catskills. There was a lot of socializing with family, with eight siblings on both my father's and mother's side, and all of them settled in New York City. Obviously, there were a lot of occasions for families to get together.

Q: You say New York City. What are we talking about?

WEINTRAUB: The five Boroughs, but mainly Brooklyn.

Q: Now, was your block a Jewish block or a mixed block or what was it?

WEINTRAUB: The area is called Bensonhurst. And it's fairly heavily Italian and Jewish, and the Jewish is a mixture of both Eastern European, Sephardic, and Syrian, one of the variants of Middle Eastern Jewry. There was also a smattering of Chinese laundries and a few residents of other ethnic groups, but it was mainly Jewish and Italian. I can't remember meeting anyone at that point who was not either Jewish or Roman Catholic and you could have fooled me in saying that this is a Protestant country and I'd say, I never knew any, I never knew any growing up.

Q: As a kid, how did the mix go? Did the Italians stick to themselves; did the Jews stick to themselves? At the kids' level?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I can't remember whether it was one way or another. I mean, at this era we're talking about the late 1940s through all the 1950s, America was still the melting pot. We didn't have the great emphasis on ethnicity that we have now, whether it's this ethnic month or that ethnic month. You know, at the school yard, at recess or school or after school, or at games, I don't recall any emphasis on these kinds of identifications.

Q: What about- were there many- I realize your parents were hard working people, but at the dinner table were there discussions about life beyond, politics or anything like that?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, not particularly. I guess my parents were pretty much standard Roosevelt Democrats. It was, I would say, typical of their background, their economic status in life. To the degree that we spoke about politics, Roosevelt of course was the wartime hero, the creator of Social Security. Our congressional district, as far as I know, has voted strongly Democratic all the time; we always had a Democratic member of Congress. But I can't say that we had these kinds of discussions at the dinner table very often. Perhaps when my sister started going to college she might bring home those discussions occasionally but they were not a regular feature. It mainly was about things

going on in the neighborhood and our parents asking us about what we were doing at school, exchanges of information about other members of the family.

Q: How about Israel? Is Israel- I mean, this is- as you were a kid, the- sort of the growing pains of Israel must of, you know, it was quite an item in much of America. What about for your?

WEINTRAUB: Well, of course I was a little bit young to be aware of the founding of Israel in 1948, but I'd say there was at least in my own household, at a general level, obvious sympathy for and support for Israel, but never much at the political level or at the activist level. For example, my parents — well, they never traveled outside the country other than a trip to Canada until I entered the Foreign Service and they came to visit us. So, economically speaking, a trip to Israel, which a number of wealthier people in similar situations did to show support, if nothing else, was just out of the question; they didn't take those kinds of trips. But there was general sympathy. You know, I can remember, at least to that extent, expressions of concern in the fighting in 1956, certainly, that centered around the Suez Canal. That was an issue, as a recall, generally, with support for the state of Israel.

Q: Well then, were you, as a child were you much of a reader?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I guess perhaps so. I don't think there's anything particularly noteworthy that I can recall about grammar school or junior or even through high school. I was a reasonable student in high school but did a little bit of athletics in college but I can't say I shined or that there were particular accomplishments in high school that stand out.

Q: What about in school, say in elementary school, how about your studies and all, what interested you, what didn't interest you?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I suppose I had at some point a residual, a certain interest in other societies, other cultures as best I can imagine. I remember being interested in learning

about animals and how they lived. I can't really say - I have to think about it a long time before - I can't put my finger on any particular field of study or any hobbies. I did the Cub Scouts, I did the Boy Scouts. I went on a number of overnight hikes, did the camping bit. But I can't think of any particular field of study that attracted me at that time.

Q: Well then, where did you go to high school?

WEINTRAUB: I went to a local high school called Lafayette High School, not too far from home.

Q: Again, was that pretty much a Jewish-Italian high school would you say?

WEINTRAUB: For the most part Jewish-Italian, but it also had some African-American students there as well. But it was a time, in the late 1950s, when there were concerns about juvenile delinquency. You probably know that phrase, we don't use it much anymore, but anyway, that was a catchphrase and a problem that people were concerned with. On that subject, every once in a while there were rumors in the high school I can remember about some other group from some other high school that was going to attack our school and start a fight, but of course these events never materialized. But high schools are always awash with rumors of some dramatic event likely to happen or not. Overall, I was not particularly active in high school; I wish I had been, but there was nothing particularly outstanding about my high school record, I'm afraid.

Q: Well, while you were in high school, what were you point towards? Anything?

WEINTRAUB: Well, Lafayette High School — I don't think it had a great record of students going on to college, particularly not to stellar colleges. I imagine most of the students, if they're from something like my economic background, could only afford to go to the local colleges, wouldn't go away to college. And I'm not even sure that I was fully determined to go on to college at all, but my sister probably was a better student than I was in high school and by that time, four years ahead of me, she was just finishing at college.

Q: Where'd she go to school?

WEINTRAUB: She went to Brooklyn College. And she set an example in that regard, so I guess by the time of my senior year I thought, well, I might as well go on to college. There didn't seem to be any reason not to do so, it was just a matter of — it was not a matter of filling out 16 applications and you have a safe school, a preferred school; it was either Brooklyn College or nothing.

Q: When you were in high school, did you get after work or summer jobs?

WEINTRAUB: I always had after school work, a variety of work. For several years I was a delivery boy in a fruit and vegetable store with a bicycle, you know. I guess this is —

Q: With a big basket.

WEINTRAUB: This is unique to New York City or Brooklyn, perhaps, with the big basket and you deliver to homes in the neighborhood. I had a variety of jobs: I worked in a carwash, worked in one of the department stores in New York during the Christmas holiday season in the packaging department; packages would come down and you'd have to put them in the appropriate box and prepare them for shipment in the mail. So I had a variety of jobs — a camp counselor once or twice, a variety of different jobs.

Q: Well then, you went to Brooklyn College from when to when?

WEINTRAUB: Actually, my first year was Hunter College. In fact, I didn't make the cut to Brooklyn College because it was just that much more competitive and crowded, so my first year I went to another element of the City College of New York, Hunter College, way up in the Bronx.

Q: It had been a girls' school, hadn't it?

WEINTRAUB: Originally in Manhattan it was a girls' college. It still was, I think. I guess it's a co-ed college now, on Lexington Avenue in Manhattan. But there was a Bronx campus as well. And for my first year I had to show I could get decent grades. And I took the subway, basically about an hour-and-a-half each way —

Q: Oh boy.

WEINTRAUB: — from Brooklyn way up through Manhattan up to the Bronx. And I did that for a year in 1959, I started in '59. I got my grades up and then in 1960 I was able to transfer to Brooklyn College.

Q: And so you graduated from Brooklyn?

WEINTRAUB: Well, that's an interesting story. I would have been in the class of 1963. But then there was an event I guess which changed my life into the direction it took, the election of John Kennedy, in 1960. And his election was a call to youth after the presidency of Eisenhower. Kennedy projected the image of youth, of dynamism, of concern — and the Peace Corps. And I was captivated by this idea and this was without having had any previous exposure to international affairs or any particular interest in the subject. As a matter of fact, when I landed at Brooklyn College I became active in the speech and theater department and I was active in the drama society, and I was active in acting, in stage design, in costumes, in props, behind the stage, I did a lot of work there. As a matter of fact, I was about to be elected in my senior year to be the president of the drama society, but then I told my friends in that spring of 1962 that I would leave, so I took a leave of absence, which is a bit unusual, I took a leave of absence in 1962, and started a Peace Corps program.

Q: This is early days of the Peace Corps, wasn't it?

WEINTRAUB: I was in the very first group to go to Liberia in 1962. I think the very first group in the entire Peace Corps started in the summer of 1961. John Kennedy, of course,

was elected in November 1960 and took office in January 1961. I believe the first groups were out of the country in the summer of 1961. I think they went to Tanzania and the Philippines and Nigeria. I'm not sure; I'm not accurate on that. But I guess by 1962 they really had geared up and I joined a group of about 90 people, I think, who had its training program at the University of Pittsburgh.

Q: Well, was the Peace Corps taking people who had not graduated from college?

WEINTRAUB: Obviously they did, they took me.

Q: Yes, but I was wondering whether-

WEINTRAUB: As a matter of fact, yes, they did. The majority of the people were what we used to call BA generalists. Kind of do-gooders, people with — typically with a liberal arts background who had really no great particular skills to offer the Third World, but they had an outpouring of empathy and wanted to do a good job. So in my case I joined with others and we were trained to become school teachers. My group, the majority of them, a group of about, I'd say, between 85 and 90, the majority of us were just out of college. A few had already been school teachers for a number of years. Some were in their early 30s, or mid-30s, had been school teachers already. And we actually had a couple of old timers, people who had retired and were in their '60s and thought this was something they might like to do. I may have been the only one, or one of the few, who had not yet graduated from college, so I was one of the younger ones in that group.

Q: What did your parents think about young Leon taking off?

WEINTRAUB: Well, that's interesting in that I'm asked about that occasionally, and I have to give my parents quite a bit of credit considering their background, their lack of exposure to the international arena, their lack of travel. I don't recall any determined effort to dissuade me from doing thafrom going off in the Peace Corps. At this point my sister was in graduate school at the University of Michigan with her husband, she had married.

Although most of my peers as far as my first cousins in my extended family, most of them were in college or had graduated college and were living in the area, some already married, somehow I'm surprised now, I don't remember any serious attempt by my parents to talk me out of it, to dissuade me. I think they felt a little bit of pride, perhaps, maybe they did.

Q: Do you recall any of the sort of screening thing when you appeared, I assume, before a person or persons?

WEINTRAUB: Obviously this goes back quite a number of years; I can't say that I remember a screening procedure until we arrived at Pittsburgh. So until we were selected to join the training program I think it was all through the mail. There might have been a phone call or two but all the application process was through the mail. But there was a screening process at the training program at the University of Pittsburgh and as a matter of fact some people were selected out during that process. There was some kind of a — there was a fellow there who was a shrink, a psychologist, and he was there observing our behavior during our classroom sessions and during our other activities. There were, as best as I can recall, one-on-one interviews with people and they attempted to gauge who would fit better than not. And, as I recall, there was some kind of an unpleasant feeling whenever someone didn't show up the next day, it made people feel a little bit uneasy, but I think that's where that “selection-out” took place, rather than earlier in the process.

Q: What was the training like?

WEINTRAUB: It was basically a summer type of a program as I recall. We started in June and we left for Liberia in August. It was a combination of area studies and teacher training. They brought in a couple of anthropologists, political scientists maybe, to talk about Liberia, to talk about U.S. relations in Africa; we had a lot of anthropological background about the peoples of Liberia. We had health preparation. We had PE to get us in fairly good shape. And we had a fairly extensive or, should I say intensive, period of teacher

training. As for the program, I would guess that Peace Corps had a contract with the School of Education and we were put in an accelerated teacher training mode. We had a number of classes in education and then I guess Pittsburgh had a summer program for kids, I guess mainly inner-city kids who needed to go to summer school to catch up. And after a certain period we were put in the classroom, with experienced observers behind us, and we had to do preparation and perform. We had to prepare teacher preparation modules and lesson plans, and we probably had several weeks of this to get on-the-job training. Then we finished our program, had our graduation ceremony of sorts, and were disbursed home with plans to meet on a specific date at what was then Idlewild Airport, the former name for JFK Airport, and we took off on a chartered Pan American plane—again, these icons of yesteryear—on a Pan American. Obviously, this was in '62, it was not a jet. We had to make a refueling stop in the Azores. And I still have some pictures that I took in the airport there; we stayed there for an hour or two and then on to Liberia in August of 1962.

Q: You mentioned that the election of Kennedy was an important step in your career. Did you get involved in that election at all?

WEINTRAUB: No, I was — let's see, in the fall of 1960 I would have been 18, maybe, I guess I did vote.

Q: You couldn't vote in those days.

WEINTRAUB: It was older than 18?

Q: I think it was 21.

WEINTRAUB: I don't remember. But I remember at one point going to the — I think the convention was in New York, or maybe it was just a rally. I remember at some point being — maybe in was in Madison Square Garden — but I remember at some point having a button for the campaign and seeing John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. I was

somewhere very, very high up in a convention hall and I remember seeing John Kennedy onstage — probably, you know, no bigger than an inch in your eye. So at some point some enthusiasm began to infect me, but I can't say I was an active participant of any kind.

Q: Was there, when you joined the Peace Corps, were you given any options about where you might want to go?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I suppose, again this is a guess, I would imagine the application form probably asked you to state a preference. Other than a trip with my parents up to Canada, I hadn't been out of the country. I had some French language education in high school and college, but I was not particularly good at this so I didn't have any particular linguistic abilities to lend. I doubt that I selected a preference, a region or anything else, and when the offer came to go to Liberia it sounded as good as any other place, so I was happy to go.

Q: You were in Liberia from what?

WEINTRAUB: 1962, we arrived, we came in August 1962 and we were there for two full years, until the summer of 1964.

Q: What happened? Where's you go and how'd you- I mean, what were your initial impressions of Liberia?

WEINTRAUB: Well, it was obviously like nothing I could ever have imagined. You know, I was raised on the movies of Tarzan, so that was the period. Africa was all the jungle and snakes and wild animals all around, and people lived in villages; that was what you knew of Africa. Obviously the city of Monrovia at that time was a city of maybe 100,000 people or so and so it was urban in that respect, but once you got off a lot of the main streets much of it was unpaved, much of it did not have electric supplies or pumped water. Piped water was not available in a lot of the city so it was very much a mix of something you'd like to say was a city but yet, you know, you'd step back a little and there's a lot of

the “country” that was still in the “city.” I thought it interesting that apparently when people settled, when people from the hinterland, as it was called, or from the provinces, settled in Monrovia, they often settled near other people from the same area of the country. Since there were a lot of languages, a lot of dialects spoken in Liberia, very often these people came into Monrovia with very limited English so they settled in an area settled by people from their same region if not from the same tribe. So you had little linguistic pockets which I guess is not very different from a Little Italy or a Chinatown; I mean, people are the same all over, they like to settle where they can do business, where they can survive using their own tongue, using the mother tongue.

My first year I was a little disappointed, in that when we arrived I was assigned to a school in the capital, Monrovia. We had an in-country training program for a couple of weeks to get acclimated to the climate and the health situation. I think it was at a teacher's college. In addition, there was a more intensive in-country orientation. And then we got our assignments. And I was assigned to a school in Monrovia. So I was disappointed because I came to see the “real” Africa, so to speak, the Africa of my ignorance as a child. Other people did get those assignments. But there were a fair number of us who were assigned to Monrovia. I was at a middle school or a junior high school. I shared an apartment with another fellow, another Peace Corps volunteer. I think he was at a high school. I became a math teacher, a junior high school math teacher. I walked to school on some paved streets, some dirt streets. But I had a fabulous and warm reception at the school, a very, very friendly reception.

As a matter of fact, there was another welcoming incident that happened fairly shortly after I arrived that a year or two later was written up in an issue of the official Peace Corps magazine. Shortly after I moved in to our apartment in Monrovia, one Friday or Saturday evening I was strolling around the neighborhood and walking down a lane, an unpaved street. Outside of a modest home in the front yard there was a large crowd gathered, and a lot of drumming and singing going on. So I joined the crowd to see what was happening. I was the only white face in the crowd. And gradually, people watched what

was happening and then moved away to go on about their business, because, I guess, this was not an unusual occurrence. Well, for me, of course, this was the most unusual occurrence in the world. So, as the original members of the crowd drifted away I moved forward more and more until I was at the front of the crowd, kind of in a large horseshoe shape around the front yard. Basically there were a number of people seated in front of the house in what were apparently seats of honor and the drummers and singers were entertaining these people who were in the seats of honor. At one point one of the people in the seats of honor came up to me. Obviously, as I said, I was the only white person in the crowd, he came up to me and asked me, are you interested, you seem to be interested since you are here such a long time. So I explained who I was. I'm not sure if anyone in the crowd had heard of the Peace Corps, we were quite new, probably in the country only a month; and he said well, you have to be our guest, you can't just stand around with the crowd, you're an honored guest, you came from the United States. So somehow I joined the other guests of honor at this event. (end side one, tape one)

It turned out that the fellow who came up to speak to me was the owner of the house where these activitiereally, one should say festivitiewere going on. The eventhe drumming, the singing, the dancing, the drinkinwas in honor of one of the country's Paramount Chiefs who came to Monrovia from the “hinterland” for a special meeting of all the country's Paramount Chiefs with President Tubman. By way of explanation, in Liberia every “upcountry” town had a town chief, and then several adjoining towns of the same clan had a clan chief, and a number of clans would be joined into a chiefdom, and the chiefdom was under the jurisdiction of a Paramount chief. Well, a number of paramount chiefs had come into Monrovia for one of their periodic meetings with the president of Liberia, and the host of the event was simply entertaining his paramount chief from his home village. And I developed a friendship with him, this man by the name of Sammy Deemi. I came back to see him the next day in the morning, and I had a chat with him and the chief. Several weeks later, when Sammy made one of his periodic weekend visits up to his village where he came frosince he had a home there, and his wife was up there while he worked as

a civil servant in Monrovihe invited me to go up with him. I had a wonderful weekend, probably one of the most exciting weekends in my life. I mean, I got out to see the real Liberia, so to speak, beyond the paved roads, beyond the electric lines, beyond the indoor plumbing and we made a number of trips up there during that first year I was in Liberia. And in fact, I was able, for my second year, to make a transfer into this village. So as a result of this chance meeting, I finished my first year in Monrovia, as a junior high school math teacher, and then I transferred and went to the village of Kahnple and joined the local school as one of the elementary teachers. I think I was teaching third grade and fourth grade, as best as I can recall; or maybe fifth and sixth grade.

Q: While you were in Monrovia, how did you find teaching in some of the school administration?

WEINTRAUB: Well, using the term “school administration” would probably be a little bit overkill. I mean, obviously we had a principal and I remember I was good friends with other teachers, with an English teacher, Elizabeth Brewer, and with a science teacher, a Mr. Mitchell. As a matter of fact the English teacher invited me to her home at one point during the school year; she was having a birthday party for her husband. And this is a separate interesting story. Years later in the late '70s, her husband, Herbert Brewer, to whose birthday party I was invited in early 1963, became Liberian ambassador to the United States and I met them here in Washington again. But anyway, we were very friendly. They invited me on a number of occasions, I met their children.

Concerning our teaching responsibilities, there was little in the way of formal guidance. Obviously there was a curriculum but, for the most part, you were given some books (as I recall, the books were all hand-me-downs from schools in the United States) and not much in the way of support or guidance. You had to make do as best you could, given the preparation we had had the summer before as far as lesson plans, getting a syllabus, making sure you gave exams periodically. You were thrown in and it was sink or swim, you know; congratulations, you're a school teacher.

Q: Did you run across this division that I've heard about Liberia between the American-Liberians and the natives?

WEINTRAUB: Yes, the terminology is the “Americo-Liberians.”

Q: “Americo.”

WEINTRAUB: Right. These “Americo-Liberians” are the descendants of those freed slaves who had been repatriated from the United States in the 1820s and '30s and came back and settled that area of Africa and established a Republic of Liberia. Yes, that division between the “Americo-Liberians” and the “indigenous people” was still there, although it was starting to break down, but change was coming too slowly and it was late to do that. The government of Liberia remained pretty much in the hands of the descendants of the freed slaves, the Americo-Liberians. But there was beginning to be more and more intermarriage; children from the interior occasionally were being adopted into the more established families, the families of the elite, if you will. They were sent to school and sometimes they adopted the name of their patron family. So the barrier between the two groups was breaking down, but there obviously was a division.

As a matter of fact, politically the country was divided into states and provinces, similar to the United States where we had the states and the territories before all the areas became states. So along the coast, where these settlers had established their villages and towns, there were states along the coast and each of the states had certain representatives and senators elected to serve in the national legislature. But in the “upcountry” areas, in the interior, the native jurisdictions were organized into provinces and the provinces were governed by a governor appointed by the president. They didn't have direct representation; they were ruled through the chiefs who were under the governors. But that was starting to break down. As a matter of fact, I think while I was there, if I'm not mistaken, the districts were starting to be reassembled into states and you could see more and more of this happening; for example, when I transferred to the interior for my second year, the

area was part of the Central Province, but when I left one year later it was part of Nimba County. There was more political rhetoric on all the people of Liberia working together, but of course many years later there was a coup in 1979 when the established government was overthrown, the president assassinated and the whole political system was thrown into a turmoil from which they've barely recovered to this day.

Q: How did you live in the village? What was the name of the village?

WEINTRAUB: The village went by the name of Kahnple. Obviously there's no “correct” spelling, it's a phonetic spelling, but I think the preferred was Kahnple. The people were of the Gio tribe (pronounced “Gee-oh,” with a hard “G”) and spoke the Gio languagwhich was one of scores of languages in Liberia. And I lived on a small compound that had been set aside by the government. There was a school on the compound, there was a clinic on the compound, and there was a house for the teacher on the compound. So the house was already standing when I got there. Peace Corps gave me the minimum furnishings for the house, a bed, a dresser, a table, some chairs. We had a kerosene stove and a kerosene refrigerator. Right to this day I'm not quite sure how burning a kerosene wick got a refrigerator cold, but it did. And I remember the first week I was there a number of the students helped me and we built a latrine outside the house and that was it. For showers, hopefully when it rained at night, I stood behind the house and we had the corrugated zinc roofs without gutters, of course, so that water came running off the back of the house and that's how you took a shower, or you collected the water in the rain barrel and took a bath when you could. So it was fairly rudimentary.

Q: Were you by yourself?

WEINTRAUB: I was by myself in the village. The closest other volunteers were a couple, maybe 10 to 12 miles away. I was actually at the end of the road. I was at the end of the road right next to Guinea, kind of near where the borders of Liberia, Ivory Coast and Republic of Guinea met. You could kind of walk into either one from where I was, a walk

of a few miles. But going back in the direction of Monrovia, this couple [Betsy and Vernon Young in Zorgowee] was about 10 to 12 miles away, and then if you go further in toward Monrovia, for another 12 miles or so, there was a larger town, the provincial capital of Saniquellie, which had maybe three or four Peace Corps volunteers there [David Baur, John Acherman, Linda Foster, anI thinSheila Hegy]. So I was at the end of the road and learned to just be there as a school teacher.

Q: How'd you find the teaching and the students?

WEINTRAUB: Well, it was a challenge. Obviously I didn't have a wealth of resources or experience to draw upon. Considering what I saw in the other Liberian teachers at the school, though, I had no doubt I was an improvement. The other teachers, I don't think they were high school graduates. There was a lot of learning by rote, which was not surprising. We were advised that we should expect to see that — a lot of repetition, a lot of rote. There was also a lot of corporal punishment for kids getting out of line, usually with a switch, you know. And I have no idea what the drop out rate was, what kids went on to high school. It was a challenge. The students were a variety of ages. As I recall, I may have had fifth and sixth grades. A lot of kids may have started school roughly at the age that you should start, let's say six or seven years old, so they were roughly the age you would expect for that grade, but some of the kids were in their late teens or early 20s because they didn't start when they were supposed to. Their parents kept them working on the farm, particularly girls - girls often were held back, it was not considered appropriate for girls to go to school. So it was a mix and it was all the challenge you'd ever imagine as the Peace Corps said you can expect.

Q: How'd you find the social life there?

WEINTRAUB: There wasn't much of it. I did a fair amount of reading. Peace Corps in those days gave us a footlocker of paperback books and that was a treasure. We had a kerosene lantern. But, you know, I would often go into town. Typically, I can recall, most

often I would go into town on the nights when there was a full moon when you could see where you were walking because when there was no moon you didn't see anything. There were no lights, other than occasionally a candle or a kerosene lantern in someone's home. So there was one shop in town that had a kerosene chiller where you could buy a Coca Cola or a beer and people would come and assemble and chat. There weren't that many English speakers in town, so there wasn't many people for me to mix with.

Actually, there was also a small, small community of Lebanese traders in town. All through West Africa Lebanese merchants had a lot of the small retail trade. The Liberians might be little street corner vendors. I can remember Liberian vendors selling cigarettes or chewing gum, shoe laces or things of that nature, but in order to open a shop and have inventory and refrigerators and wholesalers and bank accounts, most Liberians didn't have the resources to do that. If they were educated enough and had capital, then they wanted to go to higher education and they wanted to become a professional of some sort. So typically this void, this retail void in trade was taken up by the Lebanese and obviously they were not in the smaller villages but my village or town was about as small as it got but yet still had a few Lebanese shops. And obviously there was social segregation, if you will, between the Lebanese and the Liberians. The Lebanese shopkeepers all had Liberians working for them as stock boys or traders and salesmen, but there was pretty much a rigid social segregation between the Lebanese and Liberians. I can't say real hostility, but they just- they were two cultures that didn't mix very well together. The Lebanese, we used to joke - very often they'd come as a single young man to make a fortune and at one point they'd order a mail order bride and we'd see that happen occasionally; a young girl would appear in town from nowhere and there would be a wedding and they'd set up shop there. And they got along together, the Lebanese did business with the Liberians and the Liberians needed outlets for supplies, oils and other things like that, so occasionally I'd chat with these people as well, they all spoke English. But not much in the way of social activities, you couldn't go to the movies or to the bowling alley. Not much activity there. Not even a Dairy Queen.

Q: Did you sense any feeling of unrest, discontent or anything? I mean, were you able to sort of check the political pulse or was there a political pulse?

WEINTRAUB: Well, probably not. I was probably not particularly sensitive to it at the time. But it was kind of a- the government, I guess, was kind of- it felt as a benign, paternal type of a presence. Kahnple was, I believe, typical of a lot of the Liberian villages, the people looked to the government. The government needs to build us a road; government needs to build us a bridge; government needs to build us a school. Not much in the way of civic action, civic organization. The only kind of organizations there were the informal tribal associations. I saw instances of trial by ordeal, you know, the kind of, not exactly witchcraft kind of thing, but people were put on trial for theft of some kind or another, and they had to go through a trial by ordeal, some kind of rudimentary justice, if you will, being meted out. But there was really no government presence at all in the village, other than the school and the clinic that was serviced several days a week. The chief, if you will, the chief of the town, was the government. I don't know if they paid any taxes. This whole thing eluded me, was not part of my understanding of what went on, but certainly I didn't feel any sense of hostility toward the government.

Q: Did you get any feel for- I'm told that in that area there are these sorts of secret societies and kidnapping of small children.

WEINTRAUB: Oh yes. We were advised about this in training, in Pittsburgh about the secret societies; as I recall, the men's was the “Poro” and the women's was the “Sande.” I believe they were more active along the coast rather than inland, but they existed inland as well. Occasionally you'd see a group of young girls or boys, often with some kind of white-powdered mixture on their faces, and they were going to be led away into the bush. I say “led away,” but I am confident it was all voluntary, I didn't get a feeling of coercion about it at all. This was training, if you will, to be initiated into adulthood, and the children might be away a couple of weeks, and that was an accepted rite of passage, if you will,

that was done. One didn't ask much about this and one didn't expect to be told much about it.

Occasionally there were stories going around, I don't know if they were rumors or not, of kidnappings of children for ritual murders, for stealing of the heart or the liver or the genital organs or something like that, and one never knows how true these are, or whether these are rumors that just get out of hand. It's obviously sensational and occasionally there'd be stories in the newspapers about searches for victims or for the people who did that, but I'm really not sure how much of this happened then. Occasionally there are stories are in the paper these days until now about this happening in Liberia particularly during the breakdown of society in the civil war that happened in the '80s and the '90s. But I never was aware of such events affecting anyone in particular.

As I said, I did witness a trial by ordeal. I don't remember what the offense was, maybe some petty theft. As best as I can recall the “trial,” it took place in the main village compound. There was a pot of boiling oil, or heated oil, palm oil that was typically used for cooking. After the chief heard about the case, the person who was accused was to stand before this pot. Three stones were dropped into the oil and he had to reach in and pull the stones out one by one. And presumably if he was innocent he wouldn't get burned; if he was guilty he would get burned. Another case involved use of a machete or cutlass, if you will. The machete was heated in a fire and then it would be pressed against the calf of the accused and if he screamed out in agony, in pain, well, he was guilty. I suppose one can label this as kind of a trial by witchcraft. So I witnessed some of these but I don't have any firsthand awareness of anything more serious such as these ritual murders.

Q: Well, that type of trial by ordeal was going, up through the 15th, 16th century back in England and I think a little bit in the United- well, in the colonies.

WEINTRAUB: People were thrown into a well or into water and they were tied up. If they sank, they were guilty. So, yes, it's not like we never heard of anything like that before. And this seemed to be accepted as the way you did things.

Q: You left there in what, '64?

WEINTRAUB: I left there in '64, though I didn't come straight back home. What I did was — at this time I'd heard about the kibbutz social and agricultural movement in Israel. Africa obviously was an area, or at least Liberia was an area, that needed agricultural development. We knew as volunteers that industrialization, if you will, was not necessarily the way to lift Liberia out of poverty, and that you had to start with agriculture. This was the base; this was what 80 percent of the people did for a living, or maybe even 90 percent. The movement of the kibbutzim in Israel was becoming quite well-known; there were a lot of positive articles about it in the press particularly from people who were writing about development, offering it as a new kind of agricultural development alternative. There was also an embassy of Israel in Liberia. This was before the Six Day War in '67 when Israel had a lot of embassies throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

So I made some inquiries and I managed to arrange a deal where I could get myself into Israel and serve as a volunteer on a kibbutz. So I made a trip when I left Liberia - and this was an interesting trip, if I may digress here. I made arrangements to travel by ship from Monrovia up the west coast of Africa to the port of Marseilles in France, where I would then transfer to another ship going from Marseilles to Haifa in Israel. Well, it turns out as I board the ship, and all this was September of '64, the president of Liberia and an entourage are on this very same ship. They were on their way to a conference in Egypt which was going to result in the formation of the Organization of African Unity. There had not been an OAU at this time. Liberia, of course, had been independent for many years, but the first wave of African countries that had been European colonies were just becoming independent; Ghana in '57, Guinea in '58 and most of the British and other French colonies in 1960. There had been a number of preliminary conferences but this

was the summit conference in Cairo and I guess the president of Liberia didn't like to fly so he ended up going on this ship. Anfor further background - while in Monrovia I had met some big shots, if you will, in the Liberian foreign ministry. It's a pretty small country, a small society, and sure enough, I met someone who introduced me to the foreign minister of Liberia—a very interesting story.

So I'm on this ship from Monrovia to Marseilles, and I was traveling in steerage; this is what I could afford. I was the only white person down in steerage. And it was a French ship, and I was with a bunch of Africans in hammocks down in the hold and somehow I passed the word to the Liberian entourage in first class that I was down there, a volunteer who just served their country. So word came back to me: one day the French fellow in charge of steering section calls me into his cabin, asked me to come into his cabin, and he looks at me with kind of that French sneer which the French are known for, if I can use the stereotype, and he looks at me, a kind of scruffy young American wearing shorts and sandals and a tee shirt, I guess, that's what you wore in steerage, and he said, “You know the president of Liberia is on the ship?” I said, “Yes, yes, I heard, I heard.” And he says, “It seems that they know you are here.” I said “That's very nice, that's very nice.” He says “Well, I have these papers in front of me that says you should go up to first class now.” He then adds, in a questioning tone, “Are you prepared for that?” I said, “Yes, I'd like that very much.” And then he looks at my outfit and asks, “Do you have a jacket to wear? In first class you don't go looking like you are looking.” At this point I had with me my one polyester wash and wear suit, the only suit I had taken with me into Liberia, that I think I wore maybe two times the whole two years I was there — this was when they used to make wash and wear suits. So I said, “Yes, I have a suit.” And he looked at my feet with my sandals and he asked, “Do you have a pair of shoes with you?” “Oh,” I said, “yes, I have a pair of shoes.” He replied “Well then, okay, I guess you can go.” So, somewhat reluctantly, he initialed the papers or something. He said, “Well, you can get your bags and go up to first class.” So I remember going back to steerage and I told my

fellow bunkmates, the Africans, that the president of Liberia was just graduating me to first class - oh, they were thrilled. They were thrilled. They were very happy.

Reminiscing on my experience in Liberia and subsequent experience in Africa, it seemed to me that no matter how little anyone had, people didn't seem to resent if you did better, if you were able to better yourself. So, without any animosity, without any jealousy, my bunkmates from steerage were thrilled that I was able to get up to first class. So, I remember for the remainder of the trip, another three or four days, whatever it was, I was in first class, mingling with the foreign minister and others from Liberia. I recall one evening when we had cocktails, I joined the president of Liberia and his party for cocktails. I remember sitting in a lounge there and I only had short sleeved shirts with me. I had my suit jacket and I remember leaning for a tray to get a cocktail and my jacket sleeve kind of kept riding up, exposing my arm. Of course, all the Liberians wore starched, long sleeved white shirts with elaborate cuffs or cuff links and I'm- you know, there's the American with short sleeves. It was just- the picture much have been something.

But it was a wonderful trip, a nice way to leave the country. We arrived in Marseilles. I remember somehow that since I was associated with the Liberian group my baggage somehow got mixed up with their baggage, and we ended up going to the same hotel. But obviously there was no room for me at the hotel, certainly, and then we bid our farewell. So I think I stayed a night in a youth hostel or something, bid farewell to my Liberian friends, and then the next day took a ship to Haifa, to Israel.

Q: I'd just like to go back to your Liberian experience. Since there was so little, you might say, of ready cash around, doing this, did you see any influence of the problem of corruption while you were there?

WEINTRAUB: Well, that was assumed to be a given. It was assumed to be a way of life in that salaries typically were not paid with any consistent regularity. Civil servant salaries

were not paid. So if you wanted something from someone in the government you had to give them a bribe, you know.

Q: But you were saying- did you get involved- I mean, did you have problems to get things, equipment or what have you?

WEINTRAUB: Well, typically, when traveling through the country, at periodic intervals when you passed a boundary from one district into another district or one province into another province of the country, typically there'd be a barrier, a road block, manned by some kind of a constabulary, some kind of a police force. You never knew whether it was called a frontier force, a police force, a constabulary; the uniforms they had varied. And typically these people- what their real function was, no one ever really knew. We never were aware of any real security issues to be concerned about. Their “real” function, it seemed, was to try and bribe the passengers for money to let them through. And typically they hit the Lebanese merchants who they knew had money. Of course, the Lebanese were the merchants throughout most of the country, and it was kind of a like a road tax, like a turnpike fee, if you will. But as Peace Corps volunteers, once we explained who we were, typically we were exempt from it. We didn't have the money - word did get around we were not going to pay and we did not have any money. People kind of knew who we were eventually. Our appearance also had a role: we never had our own cars, we were always passengers in a bus or a taxi and other people might vouch for us. And so a driver or fellow passenger might say, “Yes, he's a teacher,” don't hassle him.” So we typically didn't have to do that.

But we frequently heard stories about teachers' salaries getting waylaid by people taking pieces out of them along the line, or by teachers having to make a forced contribution to a political organization in order to keep their job. Stories like that were rife all around. Typically to move things out of the port you had to pay bribes to customs peoples but we were pretty far removed from that. I mean, we led our own existence, we got our own little stipends through the Peace Corps so we typically - we didn't have to get licenses

or permits or anything like that so we typically didn't have to jump through those same hurdles. But the stories were all over.

Q: When you left Liberia, how did you feel about what you'd done?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I felt great. I mean, I think I didn't, perhaps, set the world on fire, but you knew, like any school teacher whether in the U.S. or anywhere, you knew there were some kids you reached and you hoped that they would be able to go on and they would make a difference. You knew there were a lot of kids who were just biding their time for a couple of years, some kids, maybe they would do better, maybe they wouldn't. You knew there were a handful that you reached, where you attempted to open the powers of inquisitiveness to get them away from the idea of rote learning, to put the emphasis on not did you get the answer right, but how did you analyze the problem, how did you figure out the way to do that? And of course you knew in the contemporary world those were the kind of skills that were needed, not to get the rote answers in the book, but to get a problem-solving kind of frame of mind that they could use to carry on through life.

So I didn't think I set the world on fire, but I hope I stimulated enough people that it would make a difference. And obviously, you know, it opened another world for me.

Q: Well, you certainly weren't the boy from Bensonhurst anymore.

WEINTRAUB: Exactly, exactly. So it opened up a whole new world for me. It meant, probably, the first opportunity - I remember in the training program in Pittsburgh - the first opportunity I had really to meet people who were not Jewish or Italian or Irish. Those were the only people I met in Bensonhurst. I met a cross section of the country and people who had pretty deep accents from the South; people who lived in Southern California, a whole completely different lifestyle. So that was a part of my Peace Corps experience, and in that respect it was the equivalent of going away to college and meeting a lot of different people.

Q: Well then, you got on the boat and went to Haifa.

WEINTRAUB: Right.

Q: Can you talk about your experiences in Israel? This would have been in '64.

WEINTRAUB: In '64, so, the West Bank was still occupied by Jordan. I believe I had to go to Tel Aviv, go to some office, I had to check out, I was on a list to serve in a kibbutz as a volunteer. I didn't realize that volunteers were coming from all over the world, a lot of Europeans.

Q: Not all Jewish either.

WEINTRAUB: No, that's right. And a number of Germans, a number of German youth, non-Jewish German youth came to volunteer and a number of Scandinavians came as well. Israel was still the “good guy;” Israel had not been seen as an oppressor of the Palestinians. Israel was still the image of the movie Exodus, was still a heroic country in the making, so a lot of youthful people went there. And I was assigned to a kibbutz by the name of Ein Gedi, which is somewhat of a historical site, right adjacent to the southwest border of the West Bank. If you think of the West Bank curving around into Israel proper, Ein Gedi sits right across from the southern border adjacent to the Dead Sea. So it was a little corner of the original state of Israel between the West Bank and the Dead Sea. And I stayed there a month, lived in a barracks-type of a setting, did a variety of jobs, harvested the dates, weeded the onions, worked in a variety of different things, ate the meals with the members of the kibbutz. The kind of routine was waking up early, getting a little bit of coffee and bread and putting in a few hours of work before the sun rose while it wasn't too hot yet, then breaking for breakfast, then having a few more hours of work and then a lunch break maybe early afternoon and that was it because then it got too hot to do that anymore. There was a swimming pool and I think once a week the kibbutz arranged a trip for the volunteers, taking them over to Jericho, to Jerusalem, and I can't remember where, but I think about once a week they did a trip for the volunteers. There were a number of volunteers there on the grounds.

Q: Did you- when did this sort of- how was the "Jewishness" in you- you know, I mean, patriotism and all this, and two, what was your impression?

WEINTRAUB: Well, you know, I went there prepared for that, and occasionally some of the workers on the kibbutz, you'd get into a discussion with them and typically, you know, they're like a permanent kind of a recruitment poster for Israel. They'd say, "Oh, you're Jewish, well, why don't you stay here, you see what a nice country this is." So that, you know, certainly that was said over and over again by all the members of the kibbutz when they found a volunteer was Jewish in my age group, who had a whole future ahead of them, "Why don't you stay here?" You know, I don't know, it never really - something never "clicked" in order to make it happen. Maybe, I don't know, if I had already been a college graduate and I had passed that milestone, maybe I would have given it more serious thought. I don't know. But the fact that I had that ahead of me and so I was not yet a college graduate, it wasn't really, it never really became a serious option that I considered.

Q: Well then, you- by the way, either in Liberia or in Israel, did you ever run across anybody in the Foreign Service?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I guess, yes. We, through the Peace Corps, we became associated periodically with people at the embassy. We were welcomed to Liberia by the American ambassador; I believe he was a political appointee by the name of Rhetts, Charles Rhetts. He was very nice to us. My first year in Monrovia I was invited with other volunteers to a Thanksgiving meal at the ambassador's residence which made a very big impression upon me, of course, as it did on all the volunteers. And occasionally one of the Peace Corps staff, one of the senior staff in Liberia, might have a party at his house in Monrovia and occasionally he'd invite other people. One of our staff members at the Peace Corps got engaged to a volunteer and there was a bachelor party and other things, so there were people from the embassy who were invited to these types of events. I can't say I developed any personal friendships with embassy officers but I got to meet these people and, you know, I thought it was kind of neat to live in another country and to be

responsible for, being an interpreter, if you will, between that country and the United States. I can't say I had an understanding of what embassy officers did, of what American diplomats did, but the people seemed educated, literate, very articulate, and I was kind of impressed by the nature of those people.

Q: Was there any thought about, gee, maybe this is for me or?

WEINTRAUB: I don't know if it was that specific, but I guess somewhere a kernel was planted in my mind that this might be a nice thing to do, but not a driving ambition.

Q: Well then, after you're in Israel, what, about a month?

WEINTRAUB: Yes, after about a month there, what I did, before I left Monrovia, I had ordered a Volkswagen to pick up at the factory in Germany. This was, I figured, time for me to get a car. Actually, I was one of the few people who entered Peace Corps without a driver's license because in New York City, first of all, in New York City the driver's age is 18, not 16 or 15 as it is in other states in the United States, and my father didn't let me get a driver's license because we couldn't afford insurance. Insurance was astronomically high for young males. So I learned to drive in Liberia and get a driver's license through the help of some of the Peace Corps staff.

So I ordered a Volkswagen some months earlier, and about, let's say, about mid-October, I left Israel, took a plane (I guess) from Israel to Greece, and I stayed briefly with some relatives on my mother's side of the family. I had written, there'd been some exchanges of letters, and they'd said, oh, we have some family in Athens, second cousins or whatever, so I stayed with them a day or two maybe. It was very nice, they drove me around, but I don't remember very much about it. And then I took a train from Athens to Wolfsburg, Germany, the Volkswagen factory. I remember we passed through what was then Yugoslavia, and I was a bit concerned about passport inspection going behind the Iron Curtain, if you will. And then I ended up in Germany, picked up the Volkswagen at the factory and then spent several months going through Europe, Germany, Austria, Italy,

France, Spain. I stayed mainly in youth hostels, looked at the sights that I'd heard about. Occasionally I would pair up with other people at youth hostels.

Q: I was going to say, this was the era of an awful lot of Americans doing their-

WEINTRAUB: Backpacking through Europe.

Q: Backpacking through Europe.

WEINTRAUB: So I met a lot of people like that. I had a little bit of luxury in that I had a car; most people were hitchhiking or riding the rails, if you will, the train. So I gave rides to people that I'd meet in youth hostels. And I ended up shipping the car to New York out of France and then took a ferry across the English Channel into the UK. I met in London briefly a fellow from the British version of the Peace Corps, the VSO, Voluntary Service Overseas it was called. I had met them, this fellow and another, in Niger. During my stay in Liberia I had one long vacation and hitchhiked through Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Upper Volta, which is now Burkina Faso, back to Liberia. So in the course of those travels I met this fellow who was a VSO member - doing similar service as the Peace Corps. He was then back in London so I remember staying with him and his mother for a few days, traveled around and eventually, I think, got up to Glasgow. I remember I took an inexpensive flight on Icelandic Airways, which at that time was the equivalent of Jet Blue or whatever-

Q: That was- Icelandic Airways landed where, Luxemburg?

WEINTRAUB: Well, it landed in Edinburgh, I think, and the way they were ablthen, at that time, you remember, the fares were all uniform, regulated, but Icelandic could have its own fare because they had a stopover in Reykjavik in Iceland. So I took Edinburgh to Reykjavik and then Reykjavik to New York. Got home in New York in January '65, I think I landed in a snowstorm (end side two, tape one).

Q: This is tape two, side one with Leon Weintraub. Yes.

WEINTRAUB: I just said I landed at John F. Kennedy Airport - which was renamed by this time - I think, in a snowstorm in January, took the subway and a bus home. And in January '65 I completed that circuit and was back in Brooklyn.

Q: You mentioned John F. Kennedy Airport. How did the assassination of President Kennedy hit you? You must have been in Liberia at the time.

WEINTRAUB: Well, I like to say somewhat in jest that I may have been one of the last Americans on earth to find out about it in that it happened, I guess, on a Thursday around noon in Texas so I guess that would have been, in Liberia, around 7:00 in the evening. I was one of the few volunteers who didn't have a shortwave radio, so I didn't hear about it when it happened. Apparently one of the more educated families in the village who had a radio and listened to English language news regularly heard about it that evening. I was already home, in my home, and I guess he said let's not bother him until tomorrow, let's let him get a good night's sleep and we'll tell him in the morning.

So not until Friday in the morning when I woke up, I guess he sent one of his children over to me, who said his “pa” would like me to come to the house. For some reason I think it may have been a school holiday, I'm not sure why I was not in school. But his pa wanted me to come. So I went to the house and he told me, and we heard a lot about it on the radio, of course. So I didn't hear about it until Friday in the morning, Liberia time. We listened to a lot of the Voice of America on Friday and I think on the weekend I traveled to another Peace Corps home, the nearest Peace Corps home about eight to 10 miles away. There was a couple there, and I think we spent the entire weekend in their home listening to the VOA or BBC or whatever it was about that. And of course, it hit us very hard and the Liberians were extremely, extremely sympathetic to us.

As long as you ask that, I should go back and say in '63, of course, there were the freedom rides and a lot of the civil rights movement activities were going on, and we had heard about that indirectly through Newsweek or Time magazine. I remember at one point all the volunteers were invited in to Monrovia — I want to think it was at the embassy, and I guess the embassy may have had a small auditorium in it, and we were in there. I guess there was a rebroadcast of some speech by the president about the civil rights movement in 1963. I remember there was a lot of discussion about it and Peace Corps was trying to generate the dialogue about this as something we could all discuss about what this meant for the future of America. But, you know, you certainly missed a very important slice of American life, that whole period of the freedom rides in '63 and '64, and then the assassination of John Kennedy.

Q: By the way, did you, I can't remember when it happened, it was very early in the Peace Corps, where a Peace Corps volunteer had written some-

WEINTRAUB: Written the postcard?

Q: The postcard incident. Can you explain what that was?

WEINTRAUB: That was in Nigeria. That was in Nigeria and I think that was — I don't remember if it was while we were in Liberia or before we were in Liberia. The name is down in Peace Corps history, I think her name is Marjorie Michelmore, and she was in Nigeria and wrote a postcard home talking about open sewers in the streets. And there were open sewers in the streets. I guess she took strong note of the lack of hygienic standards and other things and she thought this was a kind of objective observation of living standards and how they differed from the way that her home was and this created a furor. I guess the postal workers in Nigeria had read her postcard and this created a furor and I think she had to leave and if I'm not mistaken soon after or a number of years later Peace Corps had to leave Nigeria. And I went- we'll get back to this, but many years later I went on to serve in the embassy in Nigeria and in fact there was a whole to-do about

trying to bring the Peace Corps back but that was quite a scandal so we were advised to be discrete in our observations back home.

Q: Well, I think this is a good place to stop, makes it a good cutting off place. So we're 1964, late in '64, you're back-

WEINTRAUB: Early '65.

Q: '65. And you're back home and we'll talk about what your parents thought of the new Leon and then going back to school and whatever else happened.

WEINTRAUB: Sure.

Q: Great.

WEINTRAUB: That will be great.

Q: It is the 15th of July, the ides of July, 2005. Leon, 1965, you're home. What- were you a different person?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I certainly was. It's hard to say how much your parents are aware of this. Basically, as I mentioned earlier in the recording, I needed to complete my senior year of college, senior year of undergraduate studies. And as far as my parents were concerned, I just moved back into the bedroom I had several years ago and was expected to continue where I left off. Obviously I had different views of where I was in life as a person but I didn't see myself in much of a position to do much about it immediately. But I remember I started in, and I had enrolled in college again.

Q: Which college was this?

WEINTRAUB: This was in Brooklyn College, part of the City University of New York. And I returned spring semester, January 1965, second semester. At the time I had thought about

doing something about a new major, maybe in African studies, political science, something like that, but with three years invested in my original major of English it was a bit late to change so I continued as an English major, but in my senior year I did take a number of classes in political science, things that had to do with African studies, although that field of study was in its pretty early stages in the early to mid '60s. So I did go to Brooklyn College and eventually completed my studies and graduated at the end of the fall semester that year.

Q: So '66.

WEINTRAUB: So this was like at the end, the end of '65.

Q: End of '65.

WEINTRAUB: At the end of the fall semester of '65. At the time I had already looked into graduate studies, and I made a number of applications and ended up being accepted at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs for the fall semester of 1966. So there I was graduating college in December of 1965 and then I had basically eight months if you will, before school started. So I took a semester of graduate work at Brooklyn College in the political science department. Did that semester through May or June of '66 and then went on to graduate school at Pittsburgh in the fall.

Q: I'd like to ask a bit about political science when you were taking it because I think there was some sort of earth change in political science over that time. It used to be basically comparative governments and how governments worked and then it got into the, you might say it began to emphasize, this is my interpretation, emphasize the computer and counting things and formula and all that. When you were taking it, where did it stand?

WEINTRAUB: I think it was fairly much in the traditional mold but as you did say, I think particularly in the '70s and '80s, a lot of the articles in the journals became increasingly subject to quantifiable analysis and a lot of formulas, and a lot of political scientists were

trying to use the power of the computer and typically computers do best when number crunching. So that process was in the early stages and I don't think I was too much affected by that — had there been a class such as that I probably wouldn't have taken it. But I remember taking politics of developing nations, the role of labor unions in developing nations, things of that nature, so it was more the traditional approach. I don't think the quantitative approach had really fully bloomed at that point.

Q: What was this- the emerging- anyway? It was about emerging nations and nations on the brink and there were a lot of countries which were really going to make it because they had educated people and all that. Was that going around you, do you recall that?

WEINTRAUB: Well, it probably was - a lot of that thought was going around in my mind, but as far as I could tell in academics people were still in departmental frameworks or departmental viewpoints. Living as a Peace Corps volunteer you were exposed to a particularly impressionistic, holistic view of what it is like to live in a Third World nation. Whether in a city of Monrovia, as I did for one year, or in a village in the interior for another year, you observe how people interact with each other, you observe the efficacy, if you will, of government institutions, of labor unions, and somehow the idea of studying politics of developing nations, economic development seems a very fractured way of looking at the subject. For myself, certainly, I had a decidedly holistic view, which was hard to fragment into these different areas of study but that's the way our universities are organized, of course.

Q: Were you, to put it diplomatically, a pain in the ass to your professors, by saying, well, that's all very well but if you get down to the village level-?

WEINTRAUB: I don't think I attempted to - I don't think I came across as a kind of a know-it-all because of my two years in one country. Obviously the professors, while perhaps they didn't have any overseas experience, they may or may not have had, but they certainly had a wider field of study, they had a wider range of comparative analysis to draw

upon, so as far as I can recall, where appropriate, I might have made some comments but I don't think I came across as a young, brash kind of know-it-all because I've been there, so to speak, and you haven't. Obviously, I was a few years older, though not much older, a few years older than others in my class and had some other experiences to draw upon, as far as I can recall, though, I don't think I made myself obnoxious.

Q: What about, I may have asked this before, but what about Marxism in the field of political science at that time, because Brooklyn being in the heart of, you know, being part of New York, where the socialist world and the communist world, I mean, this is sort of the hot bed, going back to the '30s.

WEINTRAUB: Going back to the '30s, certainly. I'll get on to this subject later if you make a note to mention it. There was also my experience when I went on for a doctorate in the late '60s, early '70s at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, another hotbed of radicalism, if you will. But at the undergraduate level at Brooklyn College, simply because the city colleges of New York are not residential, so you don't have that kind of a community all that much, and it was not the '30s, obviously our own society had changed a lot since then. No, that wasn't part of, it wasn't a big part of it.

Q: Okay, you were at the cathedral of learning, University of Pittsburgh.

WEINTRAUB: That's correct.

Q: When to when?

WEINTRAUB: I started in the fall of 1966 and I was there for one and one-half years roughly. I graduated in December of 1967.

Q: What were you taking?

WEINTRAUB: I had - I received a degree, it's called an MPIA, Master of Public and International Affairs. They had three programs at the time, public and international affairs;

economic and social development—maybe there were four—another one was public policy administration, and urban and regional planning. And it was a school, accredited graduate school, of course, but with somewhat of an emphasis on operational activities in international affairs compared to a school like a Columbia University which was, as I saw it, more of an academically oriented study of international affairs. I applied to Columbia, as a matter of fact, I was accepted, but I was unable to get any scholarship assistance, so had I wanted to study at Columbia I would have had to stay at home, continue staying at home and I thought it was time I moved out. So Pittsburgh gave me a pretty hefty assistantship. So I was able to have an apartment and be on my own and study at Pittsburgh. So I went in the fall of '66.

Interestingly enough, there were some other volunteers from Liberia who had also gravitated to that school so I met some people I had known in Liberia and began a course of study which was heavily mixed with international students. There were a number of students from Third World countries, some were on scholarships, I believe from AID (The U.S. Agency for International Development), some were on their own government scholarships, and typically these were people in ministries of agriculture, ministries of economic development, finance, some aspect of economic development activity. So it was a very good mix, I thought, and certainly the students learned from each other, the students learned from the professors, professors learned from the students. It was a good mix.

The school was in the last few years under the administration of its founding dean by the name of Donald Stone, who I believe had been instrumental in setting up what used to be the bureau of the budget under Harry Truman before it became OMB (The White House Office of Management and Budget). He had a long career in public service and then he set the school up. He was still there; I think he died several years later. But it was a good year, a solid year of academic study, operationally oriented.

Q: What were you pointed towards?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I wasn't sure, actually. My sister, as a matter of fact, was in her own doctorate program in political science. As a matter of fact she had followed me by a few months into the Peace Corps, although she was older than me, and married, she was in graduate school at the time and it turns out we were parallel in two different Peace Corps countries. I was in Liberia, West Africa and she was a university professor in Venezuela in South America, she and her husband. So I didn't know whether I wanted to go into academics. I thought I wanted to go into probably into some kind of operational activities, maybe AID, maybe Foreign Service; I wasn't quite sure but I was fascinated living in a different environment, working in a different environment and doing what I could do facilitate what I saw as a very exciting process of helping a developing nation to transform itself into a more productive society.

Q: Did you find yourself at all engaged in the civil rights movement during this period?

WEINTRAUB: Well, as a matter of fact as an undergraduate, in my first year from 1959 to 1960, the very beginnings of the civil rights movement, I remember this was the era of the early sit-ins in the South and I believe - I know I participated in some kind of a demonstration against - I don't know if it was a Safeway supermarket in New York or some part of a chain that had practiced segregation in its outlets in the South. And I remember my first year at Hunter College there was some kind of a demonstration organized against a local outlet. I'm thinking Safeway but I can't be certain that's what it was. And I remember participating in that. I remember when we were overseas in Liberia and the freedom rides started to accelerate, a lot of us, particularly the American black volunteers, became very interested. I remember at one point we were invited to Monrovia and either at the embassy or somewhere else we were shown a film, it was a presentation by the president or by the attorney general, I don't remember what, some kind of a presentation about the civil rights movement that was shown to all of us. Since obviously this was before satellite television, before internet, before anything else, we were kind of out of touch. We relied upon Newsweek or Time and maybe the Voice of America to find out what was happening

in the U.S., which generated some discussion about civil rights, human rights, where on earth society was going. So in fact, for probably the most active years, I was overseas in Liberia so I was probably not particularly active in any particular movement at that time.

Q: Was Vietnam at all an object during the time when you were in Pittsburgh?

WEINTRAUB: Well, when I did come back from Liberia in '65 I was advised to register for the draft board, we still had the draft. I remember I took the physical; I registered, got a student deferment as I was still an undergraduate. Then I had a student deferment again when I went to graduate school. And then for the most part I probably aged out of the draft age pool. I remember initially in '65, and '66, initially I was probably, I think, reasonably supportive of the effort as I saw it. I saw that there was a treaty after the French departed that left North Vietnam and South Vietnam, both as independent states. And I was under the impression that, well, they both should continue, just as there was a North Korea and a South Korea, I didn't see any reason why there shouldn't continue to be a North Vietnam and a South Vietnam. I guess then over the years, probably by '67, I had kind of soured on the effort. It seemed that you heard one story after the other about the corruption of the South Vietnamese government, about the lack of support, about the isolation of the South Vietnamese government. They all came from a ruling elite, didn't have much support, and I kind of thought it was a losing effort and I gradually changed my attitude from one of support to one of considerable skepticism about the whole effort.

Q: Well then, in late '67, I guess, you got your masters, and then what?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I had wanted to do something in international affairs. I wasn't sure just what. I had applied for what was then known as the presidential management intern program. I think it's now a presidential fellows program; I'm not quite sure. Anyway, these are - the program, as far as I recall, recruited people who were seen to be fast chargers, hard chargers to enter the civil service to rejuvenate somewhat of a moribund civil service, the bright young people energizing U.S. government in a very idealistic way. So I applied

for the program. At that time I don't think State Department participated in the program. I guess it was voluntary which agencies would. But I remember there were opportunities in the Department of Commerce, the post office, whatever. But I somehow wanted to get into international affairs but State did not participate. So the nearest I could get was the Department of Defense. So I graduated and immediately afterward in January of '68, I entered as a management intern in the Department of the Navy. I started in, you may remember, there were temporary office buildings on Constitution Avenue around - between 17th up to 19th-

Q: Built from World War II.

WEINTRAUB: One.

Q: One?

WEINTRAUB: I think it was World War I. So that's where I started working as a bright-eyed young man with a master's degree, with international experience, you know, full of myself, thinking I was a hotshot. I ended up being assigned to a unit called Naval Air Systems Command or NAVAIR, which was basically a purchasing arm for naval air components. They purchased aircraft avionics, missiles, things that went into airplanes, things that were launched from airplanes, the airplanes themselves, all the communications, etc. And I was to have roughly a six months or eight months internship of rotating around different sections of naval air systems command before eventually starting what would eventually be a career.

This was quite a jarring experience for me. I had entered the bowels of the beast, if you will. This was a huge bureaucracy and not particularly infected with people interested in international affairs. It was a mix of civil servants and navy officers who came in for their entries - you know, this was a Washington assignment, if you will, for naval officers. It seemed to me that the naval officers that were there didn't particularly enjoy the

assignment, there were some from naval aviation, some from ship duty, and they didn't like to be, as the expression goes, didn't like to be flying a desk.

Q: I think my brother was a naval academy graduate and a flyer, was there about the same time and he was not wild about that.

WEINTRAUB: Yes, I remember some of the pilots saying they didn't enjoy flying a desk but yet, you know, this was a huge operation, multi-million dollar or billion dollar budgets for avionics, communications, missiles, aircrafts themselves, etc. So as you can imagine, this was a very bureaucratic operation, very much bound by regulations when you're dealing with the nature of the contracts with Lockheed, Boeing, whoever, you know, you have to follow the letter and the rule of law or else you're open to all kinds of abuse. This did not seem to be what I was interested in , particularly in international affairs.

I managed to wrangle a temporary assignment within the rotation over in the Pentagon. I got a brief assignment in the OSD, Office of the Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs. The office was known as the “little state department” within the Defense Department, these were the international advisors to the secretary of defense. I managed to get into the unit of African affairs and for whatever few weeks that I was there, out of this assignment, perhaps a month, I was doing work on, for example, were we interested in honoring a request from this African country for assistance in developing a missile program or purchasing weapons or in training their army? So this was a lot closer to the issue that I had studied and was interested in. But then I finished that tour and had to go back to my home base, if you will.

I remember I tried to start something, I tried to develop something called the captain's inquiry or something like that. I proposed something to see if indeed we young interns, of course there were a few others with me, were all we were cut out to be. On entering the program, we were supposedly fed this bill of goods that we were all hotshots and the government wanted to see us progress along a fast track. I tried to see if we could meet

with the head of Naval Air Systems Command once a month for maybe half an hour and he could say, “You know you young guys, you think you're so smart, well, here's a problem I've got.” And he'd explain the problem to us. “Now, I want you to come back to me in a month with some answers, some solutions to the problem. I give you authority to make inquiries on my behalf, just say the captain” — or the admiral or whoever it was — “has authorized me to follow up.” I thought that would give us a chance to show, you know, how do we think, who do we talk to, you know. But that went nowhere, it was axed; I don't know how far up the chain of command it went before it came back to me that no, they weren't interested in doing that. So, for one reason or another, basically I resigned. I left in mid-year, 1968, probably after about six months.

I had found a network of other returned volunteers in the Washington, D.C. area. People were beginning to come back after their assignments so there was beginning to be a nucleus of returned volunteers and they hung out and they kind of networked among each other before the phrase networking came into being. And I was able to land a position with a consulting firm that had a contract with what was then under President Nixon the Office of Economic Opportunity. This was started by President Johnson for the War on Poverty and there were a lot of contracts being offered to firms in Washington. This firm had a number of contracts; the one I started on was helping migrant workers. It was trying to help schooling of the children of migrant workers. Of course, this was the time of the activism of Cesar Chavez and the migrant worker movement. We were all told to boycott grapes; there was a lot of migrant worker activity out on the West Coast but also there were a fair amount of migrant workers in Virginia and Maryland and Michigan, picking cherries in Michigan. And we had a variety of programs for health clinics for migrant workers and school for the children of migrant workers. So I did that, worked on one of these programs for awhile.

Then I was invited to head up a program, we got a contract from the Office of Economic Opportunity to work with an inner-city, what was called an urban development corporation in the city of Hartford. Hartford had developed a lot of the problems of New England mill

towns and other towns, industry had relocated or dried up and there was a hardcore unemployment, racial tensions as there were throughout a lot of the northeast in the '60s, and we had the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968, Robert Kennedy three months later; a lot of racial tensions. But I was asked to lead this program. So probably from the fall of '68 I was back and forth from Washington to Hartford; go up to Hartford for perhaps a week, come back for a few days to Washington, go back again to Hartford. Working with people - there was a representative of the mayor's office, a representative of the community and a representative of other agencies, social service agencies, of non-profit agencies, and we were trying to put together a program to help revitalize the city of Hartford. I was doing that, but I asked the head of our firm if they wanted to compete in the international area where, again, I still had this interest and he said he couldn't compete with, you know, the Arthur Andersons or Booz Allen. He was happy, he'd found his niche, that he could do good work. So at this point periodically I talked to people in AID and they said well, if you want to do serious work in AID you need to have a doctorate if you want to continue in that area.

So I started looking around to graduate schools. I had a better idea of what I wanted to do now and I was looking for a graduate program, a doctorate program that would allow me to study the phenomenon, if you will, of international development or of development. But I didn't want to study it as a political scientist, as an economist, as a sociologist. I didn't want that kind of a label or I didn't feel I wanted that kind of a framework or this kind of framework; I wanted an interdisciplinary framework because as I said earlier, I saw the problem as a holistic one for the people in the village. I wrote to a number of graduate schools describing what I wanted to see if it was available. I got some answers back saying it's a wonderful idea you have, it's a commendable idea, I think you're on to something, but unfortunately we're unable to help you out. We are very constrained by the way our departments are run and these are the kinds of degrees we offer and, you know, I wish you very good luck, sorry we can't help you. Other responses were you're just a hopeless idealist, you're just going to be a dilettante, this is the way serious scholars study,

you have to be an economist or a political scientist and make up your mind this is the way to go.

Well, the University of Wisconsin was just starting a program, our ideas had kind of gone along parallel tracks, called the PhD in Development Studies. And they thought there was a valid need for a program such as this. So we had some discussions back and forth, I made the application, I was accepted, so in the fall of '69 I loaded up my Volkswagen, the same one I had mentioned earlier that I picked up at the Volkswagen factory in Germany and shipped back to the United States. I loaded it up and virtually everything I owned could fit into my Beetle, and I made the trip from Washington up to Madison, Wisconsin.

Q: I'd like to go back a bit to Hartford. How did you find the politics of Hartford because I imagine you did very much - you look at this- because you think in a small New England or not so small New England towns that these are highly developed, highly political? You know, I was reading about politicians in that part of- ending up in jail at some point.

WEINTRAUB: I think the mayor of Providence, Rhode Island recently was arrested and put in jail. Well, I was kind of really on the periphery. I wasn't there that long. I never was part of any inner circle but, you know, I did interact with the mayor, with some members of the city council, with members of the urban development, NGO-type (non-governmental organizations) of a community council. And you know, I just began to realize that whenever you suddenly discovered something, well, this would be a wonderful thing to do, you know, there was always some kind of interest that didn't think so. And you still have that youthful idealism that says, gee, wouldn't it be great if we could work together; this is all we have to do, but then, whether it's the bureaucracy, whether it's the labor unions, whether it's the local residents, whether it's business interests or something else, and they're not necessarily out to undercut you because they didn't like you, it's just that, you know, they were protecting what they saw as their interests. So, it kind of got me involved a little bit just to see that the easy solutions would have already been done and there's a reason why it wasn't done.

Q: Well then, you were at Wisconsin from '69 to when?

WEINTRAUB: '69 until I entered the Foreign Service in '75. I had basically three years - no, first a couple of years of course work from the fall of '69 to the summer of '71. Then I developed a research proposal, a thesis proposal and I did my field research in Sierra Leone, right next to Liberia as a matter of fact. Then I came back to Madison after an academic year in Sierra Leone, finished the dissertation in about another year and a-half, I got my degree in December of '73. There were no immediate job opportunities that I was interested in and at that time I decided to take the Foreign Service exam. So I took the Foreign Service exam probably in early 1974, I believe, and then went through the process and was eventually invited to join an A-100 class in January of 1975.

Q: Let's start- when you were in Wisconsin in '69, you want to talk first about Vietnam?

WEINTRAUB: Well yes, sure. I'm glad you - this campus was a hotbed of anti-war activity. Interesting, I joked about Wisconsin because I arrived there and, again as at Brooklyn College, I was a little bit older than a lot of the students and it seemed like most of the kids, from my own perspective, had on the uniform of the day. This “uniform” typically included sandals, bell bottom jeans, the flowers in the - you know, the whole image, this was the, kind of the height of Haight Asbury and the hippie movement and the long hair. And I felt that, you know, in that environment, I felt that I was the non-conformist. I mean, this was the whole sub-culture that in this era the whole idea was to be against conformity of the mass society, this was the era of the punch card society before computers graduated beyond punch cards and the IBM punch card was the symbol of how we all have to conform. The punch cards, you may remember, all had “Do not fold, bend or mutilate” printed on them, and this became the rallying cry: I am not a punch card, I'll do whatever I want to. So in their desire to be non-conformist, it seemed to me in their own environment they're all conforming one to each other with the long hair and the outfit. So I found in that a certain degree of irony.

And in the campus, in the political science department and in other departments as well, there was a fair amount of radical discussion about Vietnam, about American imperialism, about our policy in Cuba, in the Caribbean. We had a history in Cuba, of course, with Fidel Castro, we had in the mid-'60s invaded the Dominican Republic again under Lyndon Johnson, and of course it was typical, there were a lot of Marxist-oriented readings about development. And I had a certain amount of sympathy for it. I'd seen Third World countries, but yet again, I was not prepared to buy into that. Wisconsin, I believe, had chapters of a pretty radical group, Students for a Democratic Society, SDS, which permeated throughout the '60s. So, you know, I did my best to be a serious student and try to study these things, but all of these activities and demonstrations were swirling, all of this activity was swirling all around me.

I had met the girl I eventually would marry, I met her in Washington actually, in December '68, we started to go out and then eventually we married in Albany in June of 1970 at the end of my first year of my doctorate studies. And then she came - and then obviously we went back to Madison in the fall of 1970 and actually that was when an incident occurred that really shook up the community, the bombing of Sterling Hall.

Sterling Hall housed — I think it was called the Army Math Research Center, if I'm not mistaken. And it was a facility that had some kind of contract with the military. I'm not - I don't know what they were doing but they had some kind of a contract - and it was seen like a symbol of the linkage, if you will, between the university and the oppressive military machine, the “military industrial complex,” as people were wont to say. The bomb went off quite late at night or in the wee hours of the morning. I believe it was not intended to harm anyone. I believe it was deliberately set to go off at that time not to harm anyone, but it turned out there was a student who was doing work on a doctorate program or something, he was there and he was killed. And it really set a pall (end side one, tape two) on the student anti-Vietnam war movement.

As graduate students in the Ph.D. program, we were not as heavily engaged in these activities as the undergraduates were. We were focused more towards looking toward a career, we were not all consumed by life on the campus, a number of us were married, saw ourselves, pictured ourselves moving into more adult and responsible roles. Certainly there were some, even members of the faculty who were very different, either leftist or Marxist in their views as far as the readings that they assigned and the philosophies toward development and Third World relations that they tended to teach.

So I finished the two years of course work, did my proposal, received the research grant in August or September of '71. My wife of one year at that time and I got on a plane and traveled from Madison out to Freetown, Sierra Leone, to start my field research.

Q: Did you, while you were at Wisconsin, were people taking a critical look at some of the developments of the African countries generally, the French and British ones had been given independence, most of them by this time or all of them, and some were taking different courses and most of them seemed to be courses of disaster. There was Nigeria and Ghana and Kenya and Tanzania and some others. I mean, looking at development, was there an attitude from the university point of view towards how development should progress, you know?

WEINTRAUB: Well, obviously there was a fascination at a certain level with the so-called African socialism at the time, promulgated by the French-educated Leopold Senghor, the president of Senegal. Also promulgating “African socialism” at this time was President Nkrumah of Ghana, and Julius Nyerere had his own version of socialism. This was a period of not quite Soviet ascendancy, but a certain amount of respect for Soviet style development. After all, you know, despite all the deaths, all the destruction of Stalin, for better or worse, it was a forced type of industrialization. The idea - I remember hearing some of the professors talking about using kind of a Marxist terminology, “seizing the commanding heights” of the economy, and basically whatever difficulties these young struggling African republics might have in their schemes of more socialist style

development, well obviously they were going to be thwarted because they couldn't have control of the “commanding heights.”

Banking was controlled by western institutions, development was controlled by western institutions, shipping was controlled by western institutions; so in other words, these idealistic attempts to develop along more egalitarian lines and more socialist lines, whether in Tanzania or Ghana or Senegal at the time, or in India if you will, or in Cuba for that matter, were thwarted by the institutions, if you will, of global imperialism or of capitalism. I mean, this characterized a fair amount of the environment, of the study environment as promoted by certain faculty members. I can't say I was under a degree of coercion to accept it and to parrot it back, but this was part of the environment that you were in. Again, - it probably made a bigger impression on undergraduates than on the graduate students, I think, because a lot of us had been there, a lot of the students in my program were from Third World countries as well, but, you know, this kind of idea had a certain amount of respectability. Of course, there were a lot of positive models of other kinds. At least there were various theories development, and of course academics love theories.

Q: Well, all kinds of the- sort of the results of these programs weren't as apparent then.

WEINTRAUB: Right, it was a little bit early, it was a little bit early.

Q: I mean, there was a lot of theory and, I mean, there was almost euphoria.

WEINTRAUB: There was a lot of excitement, a lot of excitement.

Q: Yes, this was the Africa's going to be the new wind and all that.

WEINTRAUB: Exactly, exactly. And in those countries that had followed a more traditional role, well, let's say in Ivory Coast, for example at the time under a French-influenced system, it was more stable, not much excitement, no theories there. The French were solidly in control, there was a lot of investment coming in. Ivory Coast at that point was the

solid rock of West Africa, if you will, West African development. It didn't have petroleum, didn't have great resources, but they were solid exporters of coffee, of cocoa, of other things and you know, for academics, that's kind of dull. There's no excitement there. And of course it was fairly obvious that the bulk of the wealth was going to France, to French nationals and to a small elite of West Africans.

Nigeria was another big country but they had just emerged from a civil war so there wasn't too much-

Q: The Biafra War.

WEINTRAUB: The Biafra Civil War - wasn't much activity going on there. So academics were attracted by excitement, by intellectual ferment and this was in the countries that were trying to throw off the shackles of imperialism, if you will.

Q: Okay. Alright, you were in Sierra Leone from when to when?

WEINTRAUB: Well, we arrived in September '71 and we left I guess in May or June of '72.

Q: What was the situation in Sierra Leone when you got there?

WEINTRAUB: Well, it was pretty much a one party state. I forget - I think it was the Sierra Leone Peoples Party under President Siaka Stevens - they had, it was kind of a benign, paternalistic one party rule. Obviously I was not particularly involved in that. As part of my research, I had developed a proposal to study an agricultural development scheme. This was where the government was trying to convince people to switch from a traditional cultivation of rice, the staple food, from so-called upland “slash and burn” kind of rice cultivation. Typically, they'd slash a field of leaves, bushes, trees, whatever and they'd plant it with rice. They'd farm the land for a couple of years, then the nutrients would be all depleted and they would go on to another field, slash and burn the debris off that field, farm there for a few years and then continue the cycle and then eventually return to the

first piece of land. This was a fairly unproductive use of land, output was not that very high, and it is fairly wasteful of vegetation.

So the scheme was to convince the farmers to seek suitable land that had water running through it, either marshes or other water-fed fields. They would then need to build some kind of low bunds around the field - if you will, low walls or berms and introduce some kind of control, little primitive wooden dams to control the flow of water into and out of the field and grow swamp rice or paddy rice, much as rice is cultivated in Southeast Asia or China. And I thought this was worthwhile studying because there was no use of high technology. At this time I had thought I was a fairly decent student of development and I'd seen the evidence and heard a lot of stories about scores of development schemes that had failed because they relied upon machinery that was not delivered or broke down, or depended upon sophisticated inputs of one kind or another, and one of the phrases in use at this point was “appropriate technology.” That became the start of this type of mantra, if you will, for development. And there was no machinery involved in this project, the people were given incentives through the use of money to hire labor, to slash the trees and other vegetation in the area, to build the little wooden or the little earthen walls around the fields. They were also given the seeds - the seeds were different, so the project did depend on some fertilizer and herbicide but not overly sophisticated stuff. So I wanted to see how this experiment was working out.

As part of the field work, I became involved with some people from University of Illinois. The University of Illinois had a contract with USAID at the time to enhance an agricultural school in the interior of Sierra Leone. So they were at a town called Njala, it was at Njala University, and I set up shop in the town of Bo, not too far from there. I was independent, but kind of under the auspices of someone from the University of Illinois at Njala. And my wife and I lived in Bo, the second biggest city in Sierra Leone after Freetown, and for the most part we were on our own. We rented a home and the first few months I did a lot of interviewing in the ministry of agriculture. Eventually I designed a survey, a questionnaire if you will, and hired two young men and we went around quite a large area of the country.

It's a small country, but we went around quite a large area of the country. I was able to work through agricultural extension agents in each of the districts, I was able to get a roster of people who were participating in the scheme, how many hectares they were enrolled for, because they got subsidy payments depending on how many hectares they were trying to convert to swamp rice. So I had, if you will, a universe of people who were participating in this development scheme.

And what I would do is I would visit these villages and towns all over the country with my two interviewers to help and my wife, of course, and I would take kind of a random sample of the homes in the town or in the village. Some of these villages were quite small, and some were larger; but we would interview people who were participating in the scheme and other farmers who were not participating in the scheme. And I did the interviews of people who spoke English and my interviewers, after I trained them, interviewed farmers who did not speak English, using one of the other local languages. And basically it seems that, number one, people who were participating in the scheme usually, but not always, usually were already prone to some kind of innovation because they had some other kind of relationship with the modern world, if you will. Either they had served in the military in Sierra Leone, they had served in the police force and were now retired; they had some kind of other introduction to the modern world outside their village and they were more prepared to listen to specialized advice, scientific advice, technical advice and see what they could do.

The great majority of the farmers who did not participate were peasant farmers, for lack of a better term, who had not heard much of anything else. And also I found that, in fact, there were significant problems: what seemed simple enough for me, such as the introduction of “appropriate technology,” etc., as I described earlier - in fact there were serious problems in that the extension agents often did not get paid by the government on time so they tended to hold back the payments from the farmers, they used the money themselves. Or the transportation broke down that was supposed to bring the bags of fertilizer or seeds or herbicides. And there were a lot of inefficiencies because the

transportation system was bad, a bridge would be out after heavy rains; there was a lot of - you know, you couldn't fix one thing before you fixed six other things. So - but it was a good year for me, I learned a lot about the development process, I made some good friends there and my wife and I enjoyed it. For me it was a little bit of a homecoming to West Africa, but for my wife that was a new experience, she hadn't been in that part of the world before.

Q: What was her background?

WEINTRAUB: She was from Albany, New York. She had graduated from college in '67 and then moved to Washington in the fall of '67. She started working as a computer programmer for the Central Intelligence Agency. This was before there were computer programmers as a field. She was a math major and those were typically the kind of people government looked for to become computer programmers. So this was interesting; when we were going out together, her local friends were for the most friends she had developed at work, friends she had developed at work in the Central Intelligence Agency, in the CIA. And, of course, all of my friends were former Peace Corps volunteers. And this was quite a volatile mix as you can imagine. So we didn't share a lot of friends together.

As a matter of fact, I have an interesting anecdote here. When I was in the Department of the Navy, before I left to go to Wisconsin, and before I had resigned from the job and joined the consulting firm, a lot of my Peace Corps friends would regularly ask me, “How could you do this, how could you work for the Defense Department?” This was during the height of anti-Vietnam demonstrations, huge demonstrations in Washington. And so occasionally they would ask me, what exactly do you do? And I said, with mock seriousness, well, I hate to tell you this but I personally have to sign the authorization orders for the shipments of napalm to Vietnam. And this was when, of course, there was a lot of bad press in the U.S. about our aircraft bombing villages with napalm and there were pictures in the paper almost every day of people on fire in Vietnam. And people used to take this seriously, how could you do this? Anyway, that was another anecdote.

But anyway, to return to the subject, my future wife came from Albany, and worked for the Central Intelligence Agency. Somehow we met at a New Years Eve party and then we were married in June of 1970, and she joined me in Wisconsin. And she was a good sport. She started out, after having married me one year earlier, on an airplane to Africa. And she adapted quite well, I think, for a young woman who hadn't had the Peace Corps orientation and experience that I had, hadn't had the “initiation” that I had. She had proven herself very adaptable under difficult conditions in Sierra Leone. So I think we had a good year there.

Q: How did you find the government of Sierra Leone? You mentioned that people weren't being paid and all that. Was this inefficiency or was corruption or what?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, probably a fair amount of both. I think the - I may have, at one point in my early interviewing, I may have had an interview with someone in the ministry of agriculture, either the minister himself or the deputy minister of agriculture. But, for the most part, my contact was with the people in the regional office of the ministry of agriculture where I lived in Bo. These regular contacts were people who had gone to agricultural school or college, and they had backgrounds in agronomy or some other field of agriculture, and they seemed to be willing to do their job, but, you know, you just saw in the office there were no supplies, no paper or typewriter ribbons, or things weren't there on time. And, you know, the stories were legion about funds being siphoned off. And typically roadsides were littered with bulldozers or earthmovers that had been imported to start one project or another and then were abandoned for lack of an oil filter. You know, in countries in the Third World, these stories are around forever, for decades. So I didn't become aware of anything particularly egregious about this. I mean, somehow my wife and I did manage to - we got our Sierra Leone immigration papers in order, we followed the appropriate procedures for expatriates to get drivers licenses. You know, we didn't have an embassy General Services Officer helping us. We did it just as a foreigner because I needed a driver's license in Sierra Leone. You know, it was very inefficient. We had to

wait long hours in immigration offices or motor vehicle offices. Now, maybe if we had paid someone under the table we would have got it in half the time, but I wasn't about to start that. So, whether we waited for so long because people were hoping we were going to bribe them or because they were just inefficient, I just couldn't say at the time.

Q: Did you have much contact with the embassy or AID while you were doing this?

WEINTRAUB: I had a little bit of - as I said, I had a fair amount of contact with the people from the University of Illinois who were there as AID contractors. I had a little bit of contact; I introduced myself to the people at the embassy. As a matter of fact I met someone who I'd meet years later in the Foreign Service, Peter Chavez, who recently retired from the Foreign Service. He's now at Ft. McNair as the head of the African Defense Research Institute, something like that, at Ft. McNair. He went on to become ambassador to Sierra Leone years later. I think it was his very first assignment as a political officer in Freetown in 1971. And I went in to introduce myself, just to register myself at the embassy as I had been advised to do.

I met a very nice fellow in the admin section by the name of James Johnson; we kept in touch over the years for a period. And it turned out that - I hope I'm not speaking out of school here - they had a spare embassy flat or a couple of flats, a couple of apartments, which were used, I guess, when people were arriving in country before their housing was ready or when they were departing from country. And I guess they kept these on long-term lease for other uses and Johnson said when - he let my wife and I, whenever we came to Freetown, we came to Freetown maybe about three or four times during the academic year that we were there - if we let them know beforehand and it was available we could use the flat to stay in rather than in a hotel. So I think we used the flat a few times. We appreciated that very much. We were pretty low on resources. When you have an academic research stipend you don't have much money there, so Jim Johnson, I remember, was very helpful.

I don't remember, maybe the ambassador was Don Petterson; he may have been the ambassador or the charge. I may have met him once, I'm not sure. But it was not regular contacI had only occasional, sporadic contact with the embassy. I met some Sierra Leone academicians at Fourah Bay University, one of the major universities that the British had founded, a very good school of high quality, people in the agricultural economics department, but for the most part we were on our own. We felt reasonably secure, the country was reasonably safe. There was the usual amount of petty crime, housebreaking, particularly of ex-pat homes that we had to be aware of. We met Peace Corps volunteers, we were friendly with Peace Corps volunteers in Sierra Leone, who came to visit us occasionally. I like to keep up that kind of a connection. But we really didn't have much to do with the political life in the country, either on the Sierra Leone side with the embassy.

Q: Well, when you came back in '72, and you did your dissertation then?

WEINTRAUB: Yes.

Q: What basically was the dissertation, I mean, what was the conclusion?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I think as I mentioned earlier, I found out the different backgrounds of people who volunteered for this innovative experiment, and I thought this was significant because everywhere in the Third World it seemed like governments were attempting to get people to innovate: either to practice a new form of agriculture, a new form of animal husbandry, to send children to school who otherwise might not go to school, maybe to filter their drinking water, to take anti-malaria pills; trying to get people to innovate. And it seems that there needs to be some kind of a cascading phenomena of getting people involved in development and once they see a little bit of success in some kind of development, in some kind of innovation, they're much more likely to be accepting or willing to innovate in some other areas. So you can't just make a broadcast appeal to a mass population that had not been involved in any kind of introduction to a modern way of life before and hope for any degree of success.

And the other finding was - in fact - how difficult it was to introduce even a simple scheme that did not involve machinery, did not involve any high tech equipment but yet, unless you could pay the implementers on time, like the agricultural extension agents, unless you had vehicles in a reasonable state of repair, unless you had roads under pretty good shape, unless you could make sure the inputs were delivered on time, I mean, the seeds had to be delivered at the planting season and herbicides and pesticides had to be delivered at certain times or else they're of no value. So unless you can make sure that the whole delivery system was there — which means you had to have a ministry of public works to take care of the roads, and everything depends on everything else. Everything was systemically involved with everything else and you couldn't just introduce an agricultural development scheme because it sounded good and expect it to work.

Q: Well, how did this- what was your attitude after this? Throwing up your hands or?

WEINTRAUB: Well, it just made me, you know, more interested in this as a complex problem. It made me more convinced than ever that it's not just economics — politics is necessary, you have to energize people to get involved because I found similar attitudes in Sierra Leone to what I found in Liberia from people in the village: “Oh the government will do it.” Villagers might say, “We have to build a bridge over this road because the river floods periodically in the rainy season. Well, the ministry of public works will do it, the government will do it.” And the villagers didn't activate themselves to do it. It's a result, I think, of a paternalistic government. First of all there was British rule in Sierra Leone, sapping initiative — they didn't want the villagers to do things for themselves. Then there was the post-independence government itself having a very paternalistic type of role, not exactly amenable to a lot of local initiative. There were no elected officials at the village level and there was this kind of sitting back - “Oh, the government will do it” - I found this failure of interaction pervasive. Since the government in fact did not tax people very heavily — of course, there was not much economic activity to tax — I found people in fact didn't have much expectations of government. The government didn't ask them to

pay taxes very much, so in turn they didn't hold the government to any high standard of performance. And this was a cycle of nonperformance, if you will. So I became convinced that you had to get, you know, a more positive relationship between the people in villages and towns and the government if you're going to have a functioning and responsive system.

Q: Well, did you find that your- did you have any problem defending your thesis and all that?

WEINTRAUB: Well, you know, from an academic perspective I remember after the first considerable dissertation interview or major interview I had to make some revisions along the line of what the professors had advised. I can't remember the details now. You know, I remember being very crestfallen, as every doctoral student is sure he's solved all the world's problems in his dissertation and suddenly you get quite a few probing kinds of questions — well, have you looked at this and have you looked at the relationship between this and that, and what makes you think this is a causal relationship here? So you have to go back to the — not exactly back to the drawing board, but you have to invest a certain amount of time in doing it again so that's kind of to be expected when you're doing a dissertation. But you know, eventually you persevere and somehow it's done.

Q: Well then, you got your doctorate so what was next?

WEINTRAUB: Well, again I wasn't sure that I wanted to get into academics. I didn't think academics held the highest priority for me. I wanted to become operational; I was starting to look for other opportunities. I had feelers in both - or applications in both AID and the Foreign Service of the State Department. The year of '74, after I graduated in '73, I got some kind of continuing work at the university. There was some kind of a grant I got from the same organization that gave me the grant to carry out my doctoral research in Sierra Leone, it's called the Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities. There were like six state universities — land grant universities in the Midwest — who banded

together to fund research activities in international affairs and have a lot of interchange between them. Well, they wanted to do a study of their international students; how many came from which country, how many came from another country, what fields of study had they done, how many were undergraduate level, the master's level, the doctorate level, what work did they do once they went back.

This was, of course, before major use of computers, before electronic calculators or databases. So I had to visit the other universities, the other campuses, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan State, wherever they were, and speak to their international office of student programs and try to collect reams of data (a lot of it was on the punch cards), and draw basically a statistical profile of these international students at these five universities. So I did that for I think about three or four months, I did a study. I remember doing graphs and tables by hand on paper, you know, quite primitive compared to now.

Then I got another kind of interim position in the school of medicine, in an office of international health programs. They had a program where they send medical students, advanced medical students, for various periods of time to go overseas to do good works - to work in clinics and things of this nature under the supervision of more advanced doctors. So I worked in that office for several months, all the while the State Department paperwork and processing was being done. But at some time, I took the Foreign Service exam, maybe it was in the fall of '73, I think the exams were given in the fall at that time. I took the written exam, I guess they had the oral exam in the spring of '74.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions on the oral exam?

WEINTRAUB: No, I can't remember, but as I recall it was somewhat of a relaxed interview. The interviewers were kind of operational, as I recall, asking things like how would you do this, how would you do that. I remember the written exam as being similar to a graduate record exam - a lot of multiple choice and a little bit of essay. Oral exam, as best I can recall, there was more of how would you do these things, how would you do those things.

They asked you about what you knew about American society, could you speak effectively about American culture, American literature to some degree. Can't say a lot of it sticks with me. Then I had to wait - you're put on a roster and then eventually I was invited to join an entering class in January, 1975.

Q: Alright. You joined the Foreign Service in 1975. What was your basic officer - your A-100 course? How would you describe its members?

WEINTRAUB: Well, we had a good size class at the time, I think we were probably 60 or more. I think we were advised the average age group was edging up at the time so the average age group was maybe in the low 30s. I was 33 at the time. We had a few people out of college. We had a few spouses, female spouses who were reentering, apparently. I guess I'm not sure about the chronology, but I believe there was a time when if you were a female Foreign Service officer and you married you had to leave. So there were a few of these spouses who were returning. You know, I can't say I remember too much abouthere were a lot people with very interesting backgrounds, a mix of public universities, Ivy League universities, people who'd been abroad, people who hadn't been abroad. You know, I guess I was kind of focusing on learning about the material, rather than socializing a great deal with others, and of course at this time I was married so I had my own life. I guess I don't have a great wealth of background about what other individuals were like.

Q: At that time were they putting you into cones, into specialties?

WEINTRAUB: Yes, we had the “cones,” and I believe that when you had the written exam you took a specialized written exam at the time, when you specified what cone you wanted. And I wanted to be in the political cone. And I had gotten the political cone.

Q: Well then, what were you asking for, where did you want to go?

WEINTRAUB: Well, the expectation was that your first assignment would be overseas; this was the prevailing practice at the time. Since I had served overseas already, both

in the Peace Corps and in Sierra Leone, and my wife and I were interested in starting a family, I asked to have a Washington assignment for my first assignment. And you know, they agreed, the people agreed to consider it and, in fact, I was able to get a Washington assignment for my first assignment.

Q: So what was your first assignment?

WEINTRAUB: My first assignment, this was in 1975, a couple of years after the first oil embargo - you remember the OPEC oil embargo was 1973, the long lines at the gas stations, you know —

Q: Yes.

WEINTRAUB: — ...and the U.S. basically was looking for a cartel under every bed, we were very anxious, very apprehensive about future cartels. You know, we were really shocked by what the OPEC oil embargo did. So we were very suspicious of potential embargos in manganese, in a variety of exotic materials, like molybdenum, different kinds of metals of which we did not have a considerable supply in the U.S. We had large stockpiles of certain materials under the General Services Administration, they managed significant stockpiles; these were left over from the Korean War period for a certain time, and there were a lot of stockpiles.

So I had a job in an office that was kind of active at the time, it was in the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs. It was EB slash something something ICD (International Commodities) something or other ISM was the last of the acronym. ISM was for industrial and strategic materials. So another office looked at agricultural commodities, another office looked at fuels, and we looked at basically minerals and rubber, and the officers were for the most part mineral specialists, bauxite and aluminum, rubber and tin. So I think I had lead, zinc and a few other things to kind of monitor, be conversant with the embassies that were reporting on these materials, what was the supply system like, what was the likelihood of an embargo, what was the likelihood of a cartel being formed.

Other producers of raw materials had seen what OPEC had done with petroleum, and there were serious discussions among the exporters to have a rubber producing type of a cartel, or bauxite, or manganese, whatever kind of materials, and we were investing a lot of resources into studying the markets. We were very concerned about looking for substitutes. The automobile industry was trying to develop much more into plastics as substitutes for light metals. So this was an interesting field to be in. Obviously most of the officers were economic officers in that office so, you know, I had a bit of a learning curve to work on, but I had a fair amount of economic studies at my doctorate and masters level so I felt I held my own in that. So I was the lead and zinc specialist and a few other smaller minerals I had to watch over.

Q: Where did lead and zinc come from?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, goodness knows. I can't remember now. You know, I was a junior officer so I did not get the real stuff that was dangerous. We had a pretty good and ample supply of lead and zinc in the U.S. A lot came from Canada, a certain amount from Mexico. This was not a dangerous area - it was not on our critical list, that's probably why they gave it to the guy just out of A-100.

Q: Well, how long were you doing this?

WEINTRAUB: I was there almost for two years. I got out a little early because I started, let's see, at the end of A-100 probably would have been maybe May or June of '75; I think I got out maybe January of '77 to go into language training for my next assignment. My first assignment abroad was going to be in the Republic of Colombia, Bogot#, Colombia, so I needed to go into Spanish. So I think I started that language training probably in the winter, maybe January or February of '77 so then I could join the summer cycle and then leave in the summer of '77 for Colombia.

Q: How did major product of your time there come out? Did you start a family?

WEINTRAUB: Yes, as a matter of fact our first child, Aaron, was born in October '75. We - when we first arrived here for the A-100 class we were living in a rented apartment in Arlington near Courthouse Road, a lot of other FSI people were there.

Q: Not Colonial Village or not?

WEINTRAUB: I forget. It was near Route 50 and Courthouse Road. It's now something else. At that time it may have been a Best Western or something, I don't remember. We bought a house in Silver Spring about a month before our first child was born. We had moved in, my wife had the child at Georgetown University Hospital. So I started Spanish training with a toddler, if you will, an infant, and my wife was able to get some Spanish training as well, as we had a daycare facility we put our child in. This was, of course, before the Metro, it was quite a deal for transportation to get around. We, of course, were at the old FSI in Roslyn at the time, in those two tall buildings. So that is how we then began another phase of our life, the language training.

Q: So you took Spanish and you went to Colombia.

WEINTRAUB: Yes.

Q: Is this a good place to stop do you think or shall we go on?

WEINTRAUB: Let me just tell you a little bit about the FSI. I remember the Spanish training; this was my first real immersion in language training. I think I mentioned earlier I studied French in high school and college but high school French and undergraduate French — I never did particularly good at it. You know, when you study a few hours a week it was difficult. But this was, you know, the immersion program, the FSI program, audiotapes, the whole bit, the book, and Spanish, I guess, is one of the easier languages for us gringos to learn. I enjoyed it; it was tough but I did well. I got my 3/3. We were very impressed with the Spanish teachers, where each month you had a teacher from a different part of South America because, as I learned, the accents were very different,

whether a Colombian accent or Venezuelan, Argentinean, Central American, Mexican and we had them all. So my wife, she took it for maybe a couple of months and then she left to take care of our child and get the house ready for packing out and I stayed with it for the full time, the full five months I think it was, and you know, I got my 3/3, I think I said, and then we were off to Colombia. And this would be August of '77.

Q: Which job did you get there?

WEINTRAUB: I was in a rotational tour but I started in the economic and commercial section. This was the time we still had the commercial activity in the Foreign Service. There was not an FCS, a U.S. Foreign and Commercial Service, so we had a combined economic and commercial section and under the head of an economic section there was a commercial attach# and there were two assistant commercial attaches and I came in as an assistant commercial attach#. Another recent junior officer was also the assistant - we were each one of two assistant commercial attaches.

Q: Well, we can go ahead for a little while.

WEINTRAUB: This may be a good time.

Q: Okay, we'll pick up; we're just getting you in 1977.

WEINTRAUB: Summer of '77.

Q: You're arriving in Bogot#.

WEINTRAUB: Correct.

Q: And we'll take on from there.

This is tape three, side one with Leon Weintraub. We'll start this in 1977 when you're off to Bogot# as a rotational officer. Today is July 26, 2005. Leon, Bogot#, 1977. What was, how

would you describe relations as apparent to you between Colombia and the United States at that time?

WEINTRAUB: Well, obviously as a junior officer, even although I had a Washington assignment beforehand, this was my first overseas assignment, and don't recall getting particularly extensive briefing in by the desk. I didn't know what to expect, I didn't know what I was supposed to ask for, what I should have received. I suspect if desk officers then were kind of like desk officers were at any other time, briefing a junior officer going off to work at the visa line and other stuff was not their highest priority, but that's another issue. So I don't recall I had much of a substantive briefing, but as far as I could tell our relations were quite friendly. I knew, I had learned with certain area studies classes, that Colombia had been one of the oldest functioning democratic republics in South America, and a major exporter to the United States of coffee. Obviously I was aware also there were issues of underground movements, rebel movements going back to the 50s. There was obviously a serious issue of narcotics, of marijuana coming into the United States, a very major bilateral issue between our two countries. But, all in all, you know, I was anticipating a kind of a friendly and welcoming environment.

Q: Well then, who was our ambassador when you got there?

WEINTRAUB: I believe there was a charg# when I came, but then shortly after Ambassador Diego Asencio arrived. My initial assignment was as assistant attach# in the commercial section. This was before we had a commercial service, a foreign commercial service in the Department of Commerce; that function was still in the Department of State, so there was a counselor for economic affairs under whom there was a commercial attach# and he was supported by a couple of assistant attaches and I became one of the assistant attaches.

Q: What sort of work was an assistant commercial attach# doing at that time, or what were you doing?

WEINTRAUB: Well, basically it was to assist in the promotion of exports from the United States, investment by U.S. investors who might wish to invest in Colombia, help U.S. exporters find markets, or to find agents and representatives for their products. This was my first real exposure, as it is obviously for most junior officers, first real exposure to our FSN staff, our Foreign Service National staff. I think in those days they were still called Foreign Service Locals but anyway the local employees there - and I was very impressed, as I have been throughout my career, at the high level of capabilities by the Foreign Service National staff. These people had a business background, an economics background, and they knew the business sector very well. They knew how to find agents or representatives for various types of products, whether it was manufactured products, services, agricultural products; they knew the market very well. So we had to do a lot of work that was done, if you will, on a contractual basis of sorts. As I understood the process, an American businessman who wanted to export to Colombia went into a regional office of the Department of Commerce in the United States, paid a fee, and then we received an instruction to perform a search for agents or representatives or licensors that might work with this exporter and we might find three or four potentials. We'd give them a rating. That was one thing we had to do.

Another thing we did was a specific search, equivalent to a Dunn and Bradstreet report on a firm. If a U.S. company was considering forming a partnership, an alliance or a trading relationship with another company and they were unable to get a Dunn and Bradstreet report in the United States, such as would list bank accounts, number of employees and a whole kind of a profile of a company, we did that type of work as well. And a variety of different reports to support U.S. businesses, for those who may wish to invest, may wish to export, or may wish to establish an agent relationship with someone. So we did that for - I did that for almost a year and a half. During that period we had a trade fair, a large trade fair in Bogot#. The other assistant attach# who had been there before me and was senior by time in country if not by grade had the major lead on helping us to pull together a good sample of American companies to be represented in the trade fair.

Q: What type of product was- any stick out in mind?

WEINTRAUB: No, it was a variety of manufactured products. For example, there was a very strong agricultural sector. We had agricultural machinery from your typical tractors and other type of equipment to agricultural spraying equipment, harvesting equipment but also manufacturing equipment, tool and die making equipment. And we had to know what the competition was like in Colombia. Although considered a developing country, there was a pretty substantial manufacturing sector in Colombia at the time so we had to know what the market was like and where we could best complement locally-made products.

Q: What was the business climate like? You know, some countries, corruption or payoffs or you've got to get an agent who's well connected and in other countries it's rather straightforward. How would you put Colombia in those days?

WEINTRAUB: My best impression would be that unless you were talking about a very large contract and a contract that had direct government involvement, then for the most part it was a pretty straightforward business and investment sector. I met with a lot of American business representatives who sat across my desk asking about this sector or that sector. Obviously, they also did a lot of work on their own, certainly. I never got the feeling that they were discouraged as you might be in other countries, in that you had to make a payoff to get things out of customs, to get licenses. Obviously it was a Latin environment and we were coming from a different legal environment. It was not the British heritage common law environment such as we had, so things were in fact very heavily licensed and regulated, much more so than in the United States, but I think that was more a reflection of the legal code, of the legal mindset of the profession, and businesses knew that was what you had to operate in. Virtually every kind of establishment needed a variety of licenses and this could be burdensome and difficult for an American investor or businessman to understand, but I never got the feeling that it was manipulated to a great degree in order to be a coercive element.

I learned in this endeavor to have great respect for Foreign Service wives. Just one little story. Over the period of several months the other assistant attach# and myself were working with the head of the Bogot# fair, the fairly senior official in the government, in the ministry of commerce and trade, setting up the fair, where - how many booths there would be per country, what kind of companies they were looking for, what kind of expenses there would be, so over a period of several months we had frequent exchanges with this fellow. And by this time my Spanish had been improving, I had earned a 3/3 in the Foreign Service scoring system before I left for Bogot#; obviously I was hesitant at first but my proficiency was gradually improving.

Kind of near the opening day of the fair there was a reception for all the investors and embassies who had been working and I went with my wife and discovered, I don't know precisely how, that this fellow who was the head of the Bogot# trade fair, in fact was a fairly fluent speaker of English. I had never known this because my fellow assistant attach# and I had always been eager to speak the local language, of course, and we did so in our reasonable Spanish and we conducted our business this way. But my wife, who had taken some Spanish but not as much as I did — since by this time we had a child to take care of — she, after the initial introductions, she went into English and was quite pleased that he responded in kind and carrying on quite well. So I never failed to, I hope I don't, underestimate the capability of spouses to find out information that could be very important to officers.

Q: Oh yes. Often, they have, the wives often in those days would have contact with the wives of people who were fairly far up in the society of the political system or military, what have you, and they would get information that just we wouldn't get. I mean, we were more trapped in the office.

WEINTRAUB: Exactly. Number one, trapped in the office and number two, trapped in the hierarchy of things. You know if you're at a reception and you are a junior officer or a lower grade officer you just don't go up to the minister of defense and start a chat with him. But,

for example, if his wife was somehow next to your wife and neither can recognize by any symbols who's where in the hierarchy, the two women might start talking to each other and one can find out, you know, what the family is like, how many children they have; the wife might venture that the son of the minister is going to university in the United States, which might be a little interesting bit of information. So, right from the start I learned that these could be valuable, in a positive sense, obviously not in a covert way, but a positive source of information.

Q: Was commerce being affected during the time you were doing commercial work by guerrilla movements because I assume that Diego was picked up while you were there or not?

WEINTRAUB: No, that was the - that occurred in the fall of '79, shortly after I left there.

Q: Okay, but was this - were guerrilla movements and all a problem commerce-wise?

WEINTRAUB: It was a factor. There had been at least one Peace Corps volunteer abducted while I was there. The guerrilla movement known as the FARC was active when I was there. That's F-A-R-C, excuse me. Of course, most of the people seeking to invest were talking about investing in safe areas in the cities of Bogot#, Medellin, or Cali, or Barranquilla, the major urban centers, each of them had, in fact, a pretty good manufacturing center. One thing that worked to Colombia's favor — because of the mountains and the difficulty of land transportation, you had separate urban centers arising and functioning somewhat independently of each other. So you had Bogot#, Medellin, Cali and Barranquilla, each of them with a really vibrant business, industrial and commercial sector, so unlike a pattern you saw in many other Third World countries where everything was focused in the capital, the government, the business, the imports and exports, so Colombia was fairly diversified geographically, sectorally and economically. But it obviously did — the fact that there was this movement, for example, it probably had a pall on investment in the petroleum sector where you had to get people out into the field

building a pipeline across large swaths of land. Anything that involved exploration for natural resources where you had to have people outside of built up and safe areas — definitely I would say that hindered investment.

Q: Speaking about the development of cities there, I interviewed a lady who died not too long ago at age 101 or something at Barrington, and she was the first woman commercial officer working for the Department of Commerce and talked about in the '20s going up to Bogot# and it took her a week; she went up by paddle steamer part way and, you know, I mean, this was-

WEINTRAUB: From the Pacific, probably.

Q: It was a real problem.

Well then, you, after a year-and-a-half what did you do?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I was all the while hoping that I would somehow escape the, you know, the junior officer's nightmare of serving on the visa line. This is, you know, what we'd all been prepped for, and obviously you've heard a lot of war stories about service on the NIV line, the non-immigrant visa line, the bane of all junior officers. So, typically one served one year in one section of the embassy and one year in another section. Well, meanwhile I arrived in the summer, approximately August of '77 so now around late '78 we're approaching a year-and-a-half and I haven't even heard about anything, I'm pretty happy to go along.

Q: Keeping very quiet.

WEINTRAUB: Keeping very quiet, a low profile, doing my job in the commercial section. Well obviously this was not to continue. I get a call from the consul general named Richard Morefield (in fact, who later became one of the hostages in Tehran). So he invites me to his office and said well, as you probably know, it's time to enter the consular section.

You've been busy in the commercial section, we've had a trade fair, and the ambassador let you stay there a bit longer, but now it's time to pay your dues, so to speak. So I mention in a kind of futile attempt to delay or maybe even avoid the inevitabl“But I never had ConGen training in Roslyn.” This was typically before people went out for their first assignment they had the consular training program where they did mock interviews, visit “the prisons,” so to speak, in Roslyn, and I said “But I never had the ConGen training in Roslyn.” So he patted me on the back in a kind of avuncular fashion and said, “Oh, don't worry young man, you'll learn.”

So the next week I started and it was a whole new world for me. Whereas before I had interacted with the business sector at all levels from business executives down to small entrepreneurs, here I was, if you will, dealing with the masses of Colombian society eager to get visas one way or another to get to the United States. And I don't know if technically if it would qualify as a visa mill or not, probably not as harried and overworked as some others like in the Dominican Republic or other places, but there were crowds, obviously. There were never enough interviewing officers around, but between the senior Americans and the local staff we had in the embassy they had a pretty good system worked out. People would start lining up early in the morning, you'd get numbers to be interviewed, there was a - I think there was a teletype system—this was all before computers and internet, of course—I think there was a teletype system, I believe it was called the AVLOS system, Automated Visa Lookout System, and the Foreign Service Nationals, the local employees, would take the passports of the applicants, make sure the application was completed in full, and then enter the data on a teletype. It would, I presume, go up to Washington or somewhere and then a code would come back if this person had been entered for lookout for any one reason or another. And then you conducted the visa interview from there. And obviously in those days we weren't looking so much for terrorists, but it was the people who were seeking the non-immigrant visas who would then, you know, seek to go underground and join the underground economy in the United States. So there was a lot of watching over the shoulder, real on-the-job type training, watching over

the shoulder of more experienced visa officers, people who'd been doing it for six months or more, talking to Foreign Service nationals, talking to our security people. Obviously our security people had legitimate concerns about physical security because of the guerrilla movement in Colombia but also they were the ones who had to investigate fraudulent attempts to get visas so, you know, you kind of put all the resources all together and then you were thrown into the breach, so to speak.

Q: Well, how did you find- what- I mean, you've got your normal, I assume, even in those days, there was a pretty solid trade of business people and well-to-do families heading to Miami or to Disney World in Southern California.

WEINTRAUB: Sure.

Q: But what about, where were they, in a way your problem cases going and what-

WEINTRAUB: Well the problem cases were probably not, I wouldn't imagine, in any way unique to Colombia. People of limited means, these people had to show their — I don't know whether it was income tax returns or bank documents, whatever we had set up. And obviously, as you said, a lot of cases were people with considerable resources, much more than I would ever personally hope to see as a junior Foreign Service officer, certainly. There were limited amounts of visa processing through agents, but most of it was in person on the spot and there were — people came for student visas, often well-to-do young men and women, high school people going up to university in the United States. They often arrived on the scene with a mother or father. You don't have to be a detective to tell by dress or comportment or bank account that these are people of pretty good means and why would they want to be absorbed into the United States; they have a pretty good lifestyle here in Colombia.

As in a lot of Third World countries, once you get a certain amount of wealth, you can afford to hire a pretty good sized household staff, so people of middle income, upper middle income certainly had maids and cooks, nannies, occasionally a driver, so it was a

lifestyle that they would be hard to meet in the United States. But it was more challenging to decide for people of more limited means who were going to visit a family member in the United States or may have had a student visa to, for example, a stereotypical hairdressing studio in the United States. In fact, we learned, the documents were all quite legal. This stereotypical hairdressing studio, in fact, was a legitimate organization. It was authorized under U.S. law to issue the documentation that a student could use to qualify for a student visa. So that was legitimate, but if we had our doubts about the ability of a student to pay the fees and certainly about the likelihood of the person coming back to Colombia we had the right to refuse. The visa law as I saw it and as other visa officers had it explained to them was that the law was written in our favor, it was kind of stacked against the visa applicant. In other words, we did not have to prove anything. It was the onus othe responsibility was on the applicant to demonstrate that he or she, after the conclusion of his or her visit in the United States, would in fact return to his or her country of origin. So the onus of that was on them, and there were a lot of things that one learned to look at: the size of assets, size of income, number in the family, was this person a family person, did the applicant have children, have a spouse, what was the age, what kind of future was the person likely to face in our best estimate. Occasionally there were people who complained and sought a higher review in which case it could be reviewed by a more senior officer in the visa section, but for the most part our decisions went unchallenged and people just accepted it that the vice consul of the United States laid down the law.

I also learned about the - all the congressional correspondence that we had. This was a new issue for me. A number of visa applicants did come with a letter of support from a congressman. Of course, one learned it didn't take much to generate a letter of support. Typically a family member or a relative who already was in the United States, legally or not, we wouldn't know of course, but they obviously would reside in a district, a congressional district, and they would say that their family member in Colombia had been unfairly denied a visa, could you investigate? So they would write a letter either to the State Department or directly to the American ambassador and obviously very carefully -

without asking us to break the visa law, which obviously was an act of Congress signed by the president - ask us to give all due consideration. And you know, in the first few cases, these really get the attention of the visa officers but then you realize this is just a process and typically the member of Congress has no idea who the constituent is who wrote the letter, certainly not who the applicant is.

But you just learn, you begin your history in the State Department of learning to document every decision you make in case it comes back by a congressman again or a congressman for a first time. What were the grounds upon which you refused this person the visa? You have to go back to the visa application, which were on file for a certain period of time, and look over your handwritten scribbled notes and be able to construct something and based on looking at the picture attached to the application and whatever notes you had you had to prepare a letter that might be signed by the consul general or the ambassador to defend your decision. So one learns fairly early on to document what you do and make sure you have the ability to stand behind that decision.

Q: Were you concerned - you, I mean, the section at all, about drug traffickers and connections in the United States at that time? Was this a factor?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, certainly. We were aware of drug trafficking and part of the automated lookout system was in fact to come back with a code if someone was suspected and as far as I can recall the way the law was written then we could refuse a visa if we had suspicion. We might ask for the backup information if it was available and we didn't have to give a long story about it to the applicant. If the applicant persevered we might, I believe, have a one-on-one conversation with the applicant and say this is the information we have and - obviously it was not a trial, we're not going to convict someone - but we have these suspicions and it was up to the applicant to refute that information. But certainly it was something that we were concerned about. Typically once something did return back from the lookout system with such a code it was often given to a more senior officer in the visa section.

Q: How did you and your wife find life in Colombia?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I'd say it was enjoyable. At the time security obviously was a concern but not oppressively so. We were fairly open in where we could live. I believe — well, I know when I made a trip back there in later years in connection with some other work, people were restricted to living in multi-story apartment dwellings and they had to live above a certain floor. We didn't have that problem at the time. We rented a home — kind of like a townhouse adjacent to some other homes — in what was a reasonable area but not an overly affluent one. Like almost all the homes it was protected by either a stone fence or an iron gate, but that was typical for people in middle-class homes at the time. We didn't have, I'm pretty sure we didn't have, a guard as you know a lot of embassies didn't have at that time, but we had in other assignments. There were occasional roving security patrols by the embassy, but it was a light type of a presence.

Typically, I recall I took public transportation back and forth to the embassy, a bus service - I don't remember if it was a large kind of a municipal type bus or these mini buses that rode down the street - it may have been a large bus but it was on a regular bus route and I was just using public transportation, something which became unheard of in later years. So you're aware of security, and I think we had good security people in Bogot# and in other embassies where we just learned to become vigilant about which cars are parked on your street and which cars are parked near the embassy; do people appear to be loitering, etc. Even to this day my wife is much more alert, even in our neighborhood in Maryland, than most of our neighbors are to when is a car parked on the street for a long time, what is it doing there? I mean, it just becomes a sixth sense that we started to develop in our first assignment.

Q: How about, were you able to make friends, contacts with neighbors or Colombians?

WEINTRAUB: Well, to a certain degree we did make some contacts with Colombians. We managed to develop a friendship with one family. The husband had been working here in

the Inter-American Development Bank as a representative of Colombia and we met him through other people. His wife was taking English lessons, I think, and we had a friend who was a foreign language instructor for her. They were moving back to Colombia about the same time we were. I think he was in the central bank, so we had several nice visits with his family and his extended family. We also became friends with other people in the diplomatic community.

In the business sector, there was not a great deal of personal contact with the people we worked with. Essentially, business was typically transacted over lunch without families - and as a junior officer one does not have much in the way of representational funds, but we tried occasionally to have functions of our own. But we did find it very helpful to join a local synagogue in Bogot#. There was a Jewish community that had been there probably maybe a little bit less than 100 years, mainly from a lot of the same population that had immigrated to the United States. A lot of people who were unable to get visas to enter the United States went to South America.

Q: This was as the result of Hitler.

WEINTRAUB: And even earlier, even before, when the numbers coming into Ellis Island were such that all applicants couldn't get in, people were turned away from the U.S. and went elsewhere. There were pretty sizeable Jewish communities established in Cuba, in Panama, in Mexico, in Venezuela, in Colombia, in Argentina as well. Then obviously this was expanded during the 1930s during the period of Fascism in Europe, when a lot of people were fleeing from Nazi Germany. So there was a fairly sizeable community, several thousand members of the Jewish community, in Bogot#, Colombia.

We had arrived in August, I believe, so this was shortly before the high holidays, the period of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Typically, if you're going to go to services at all during the year, this is when you'll go and we were able to locate a synagogue not far from our neighborhood. We found the Jewish community there to be exceptionally, exceptionally

friendly and welcoming. And we started a relationship and actually became very good friends and stayed in touch with these people during our whole period there, our entire period there. We shared holidays with them, holidays that were very family oriented, such as the high holidays, the Passover celebration, the Hanukah celebration for the children and in fact we stayed in touch with some families for some period of time after we left.

Q: You know, I realize they are focused on different things but there's always been a considerable Lebanese community in the area very much involved in commercial work. Is the Jewish community concentrated in any particular sector?

WEINTRAUB: As far as the Lebanese community, I was aware of that at a later assignment in Ecuador. Not so much in Bogot#, not so much in the Andean. I think the Lebanese entrepreneurial sectors were primarily focused on the coasts, import-export and that kind of business. In the Andean cities of Bogot# and later in Quito I was not aware particularly of any significant Lebanese type of -

Q: Was the Jewish community working in any particular area or how-

WEINTRAUB: You mean economic sector?

Q: Yes, yes, was it across the board or not?

WEINTRAUB: No, I think - some were in import-export, some were manufacturing textiles, some were manufacturing in steel and other manufactured products. One was in leather products. There was a good export community of leather goods from Colombia — handbags, shoes, that business. So they were involved in a variety of businesses, I would have to say, typically in light and medium manufacturing and import-export, some in jewelry; it was quite a mix. Some were in the professions, law or medicine. Yes, and there was a community in Bogot#, and I think smaller communities in Medellin and also in Cali.

Q: Well then, did you continue consular work until the end?

WEINTRAUB: Yes, then I finished up my assignment in the summer of '79 with visa work. It's high pressure, but I did my best to enjoy it. I remember, often, one type of visa applicant I saw was a high school girl, escorted by her mother. The student was going to be either an exchange student in the United States or she was going to go to university in the United States. And these were people who were quite well off, they had the bank accounts to prove it and you could tell by the dress, by the language, by the pronunciation. And Bogot# women of the upper middle class typically looked very well; they knew how to take care of themselves. And I remember I would often - the applicant was there with her mother - so I would often say to the applicant with her mother standing by, I'd say, “Well, you look like a very good visa applicant, I'm sure you'll be able to get the visa but let me ask you a question. Why did you find it necessary to bring your sister along with you?” So the mother would often smile and blush, saying, “Oh senor.” But they were, you know, very, very nice people and it was a pleasure to be able to assist them in what they wanted to do. So that made up for all the difficult cases when you felt people were going to just get on the ground in the U.S. and merge into the underground economy and be a dishwasher or something else illegally. So yes, we did that until the summer of '79.

Q: So '79, whither?

WEINTRAUB: Well, obviously, we had the bidding process in the winter and spring of '79; I didn't have a particular regional focus I wanted go to. It so happened during the A-100 class when we were looking for our first assignment — I mentioned earlier that we wanted to stay in Washington because we were expecting to start a family — I had surprisingly been asked to step out of the A-100 class for awhile to participate in the briefing of a new ambassador to Sierra Leone. I think his name was Howard or Michael Samuels. This was in 1975. Based on the fact that I had a couple of years earlier completed my doctorate based on my field research in Sierra Leone that I had mentioned to you, I was asked, despite the fact I was in an A-100 class, to be a briefer for a new ambassador. Well, it turned out the ambassador passed word that he would be happy if I would take as my first

assignment going to Sierra Leone to be a staff aide to him or something like that. Well, I discussed this with my wife and as much as I had enjoyed my experience with Peace Corps and field research in Sierra Leone I didn't think my first assignment should be in West Africa as well.

Q: It didn't make sense.

WEINTRAUB: I thought once I got on this track I'm never going to be able to get off of it.

Q: Yes.

WEINTRAUB: And I did enjoy Africa, I wanted to go back, but I wanted to see other places as well. So we didn't want to go right away to Africa, we looked around, obviously you're bound by what's available; you can't just go wherever you want, you're bound by what was available. So after looking at various options, obviously I don't recall the bid list now, we ended up bidding and successfully getting assigned to Israel, to the American embassy in Israel. I had earlier made my first visit to Israel after Peace Corps, working on a kibbutz for a while and I had thought this would be a fascinating assignment, both for my own heritage and because of - you knew, you had the impression that whatever happened in Israel was news, and whatever you did in Israel you would be in the center of attention compared to a lot of other countries where you might end up going. So we left Colombia in the summer of '79 with the knowledge that we would start language training, extended language training in one of the hard languages; I believe it was an eight month/40 weeks course rather than a four month/20 weeks course as it was for Spanish. So we came back in August of 1979 or July of 1979 and went into language training at FSI, the Foreign Service Institute.

Q: Hebrew.

WEINTRAUB: Yes.

Q: And had you- I can't remember, had you gone to Hebrew school?

WEINTRAUB: Oh yes, I'd gone to Hebrew school, and like a lot of children of my generation we learned to read the Hebrew in the prayer books, learned to sound out the vowels and the consonants, but we had minimal instruction in Hebrew as a language; a little bit, but very minimal. The main job of going to Hebrew school was the ability to participate in services. This was obviously shortly after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 so Hebrew was just reemerging as a living language again, so it was not considered of major import when I was in Hebrew school to learn Hebrew as a language. It was mainly to be able to participate, to conduct service, to participate in services. So as our Hebrew instructor said when discussing the types of backgrounds people brought to the class, he kind of jokingly -

Q: This is at FSI?

WEINTRAUB: At FSI. He jocularly said, oh, so you know how to ask God for something, but when he answers you you're unable to understand Him. So I had very limited knowledge of conversational Hebrew but I guess I had a little bit of a leg up on other students in that at least I could recognize all the letters, I could recognize the vowels that were placed underneath the letters and at least I could sound out the words. But obviously I didn't have any particular advantage when it came to learning the structure of the language and how the language worked.

Q: Well, you took that for eight months, is that right?

WEINTRAUB: Right, right.

Q: And then off- how did you come out?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I managed to get a 3/3. We had one primary instructor for the full period of instruction, with one other instructor to assist - unlike the Spanish, where each

month for the four months you had a different Spanish instructor with different accents from different parts of South America.

We had a student in class, a U.S. military officer who was going to be assigned to the Office of the Defense Attache at the U.S. Embassy in Israel. He had previously been assigned to an Arabic-speaking country, I think it was Oman. He was probably the best student in the class, in that he had such a good understanding of the pattern of Arabic and Hebrew that he really did very well. FSI also had the feature to give you a break during this extended period of eight months of all-day language training. Wednesday afternoons, I think it was, rather than language training we had area studies, so we learned about the politics, the culture, the background of the Middle Eastern area. We had a - one of our Hebrew teachers, in fact, was the spouse of an officer who I would later serve with overseas.

Q: Who was that?

WEINTRAUB: The officer was Michael Einik, who later became ambassador to Macedonia. His wife is Israeli. He had served earlier in the Sinai, in the Sinai mission as part of the disengagement.

Q: How do you spell his name?

WEINTRAUB: E-I-N-I-K. He's now living overseas, I believe. Anyway, he had served in the Sinai field mission, which was established I believe after the '73 war, and he was assigned there. He met and eventually married this Israeli woman, and she was his dependent. While he was in the United States she was employed as a Hebrew language instructor at FSI.

So at this point we had our second child. Our second child, also a boy, Michael, was born in Colombia, if I may go back a little while, in November of '78. It was a very positive experience. There was no need for evacuation back to the United States. We had a good

physician, a good Colombian physician. We ended up — my wife needed to be taken to a clinic for the delivery early in the morning. As I recall, my battery in my car chose to go dead at that time — and that was the time of comparative affluence of the embassy when we had a duty driver available all night. I think this is how it happened, I'm not sure. We did have a duty driver on call, so I called the marine at post one and explained the situation and within a reasonable amount of time they had a driver from the embassy and a car come and they picked us up, took us to the clinic, and we had previously called the doctor. My wife is a little bit on the small side and she had a poncho over her, so it was not readily apparent what the situation was. Well, we walked into the clinic and one of the sisters —it was a religious clinic, not surprising in Colombia—the sister said, on admittance, you'll have to walk downstairs, not knowing that my wife was pregnant. We followed her directions, assuming that this is the admittance procedure, so we walked downstairs. So then someone said to my wife, “Well my dearie, what's wrong?” So my wife opened her poncho and said “Nothing's wrong, I'm having a baby.”

So they got all flustered and took us to a preparation room. Then the doctor arrived, he's getting ready, and we had already said to the doctoand he had agreed — that I was to go into the delivery room. This practice was still somewhat new in the United States, but I had done this at Georgetown Hospital for my first child a couple of years ago, and the doctor said that's fine. But in Colombia, South America, this is fairly new in 1978 for the husband to go into the delivery room. So the sisters on duty, they would not have any part of it. Oh, no. The men don't go in. You have to stay outside. And my wife's Spanish was not particularly fluent at this point. She was just saying in English, “He's coming in with me.” Finally the doctor passes by and the doctor says “Yes, he comes in, he comes in.” So quickly they rush the gown on me and I went in to be there. But it was a fairly easy delivery and we had our second child. So he was about six or seven months old when we came back to the United States, and my wife was able to do a little bit of Hebrew language training. We had our two children with a day care facility but she didn't have as much of the language as I did.

So then in, I guess in the summer of 1980, by then, I think, June or July of 1980, we were off to our second assignment, to Tel Aviv, Israel.

Q: You were there from when to when?

WEINTRAUB: It was a two-year assignment, as our assignment in Colombia was, so we were there from the summer, or June/July of 1980 until around June or July of 1982.

Q: When you arrived in 1980, what would you say was the situation in Israel?

WEINTRAUB: In Israel, there's always a crisis of one kind or another in this country, either with its neighbors — obviously with the history of warfare and conflict with the neighbors — or internally. It is such a hothouse atmosphere - of new immigrants, of the older societies. Actually, shortly before we arrived there had just been a tidal wave of change in government. From Israel's independence until the time we arrived, there'd been a monopoly of rule by the Labor party, by the Labor party itself or an alliance with other central left or further leftist governments. This was all the Israelis had ever known. But the other party, the Likud party, led by Menachem Begin, was gradually winning inroads and I think, when I was in language training, in the fall of '79, there was a change in government. So this was something that Israelis had to adjust to, the Labor party being on the outs, being the minority.

Also there was the proverbial debate in Israel, and this was heating up, it heats up in cyclical periods, the, so to speak, “Who is a Jew” debate. And this was, at least in part, an issue of the new society or the old societies of people who claimed Jewish heritage, whether in Ethiopia, in Sudan, or other places. Were these or were these not the lost tribes of Israel? They were groups of people who had obviously some rituals in common with old Jewish practice, but had no familiarity with the Hebrew language - but certain foods, certain prayers, certain rituals seemed to have an affinity, have a common root in ancient Hebrew practices. So are these people Jewish or not? Did they have the right of return

to settle in Israel? Were they citizens when they arrived? Did they have to go through a conversion? Who would do it? This was a turmoil, this threw the country into turmoil, it entered into internal politics.

The orthodox branch of Judaism, the orthodox rabbinate had a monopoly, if you will, on things religious in the country for the most part, but particularly in the Labor party and other left wing elements of Israel and also in a lot of moderate Israeli settlements. And this is in a society with a fairly secular attitude toward religion, so there was more than a little bit of resentment against this kind of a monopoly of the orthodox rabbinate. So this was always part of the political situation in Israel, adapting to rule by a right wing party rather than a left wing party and this periodic issue of who has the right to settle in Israel; whether El Al Airlines has to be grounded on Saturday; whether the airport should be open on Saturday for flights that were not El Al. I mean, these things are going on all the time in the country and there are strikes, due to a very strong labor movement; it's just a hothouse atmosphere.

Q: This is, of course, before the Lebanese war, you might say.

WEINTRAUB: This is before the Lebanese war.

Q: Yes, so I imagine that's sort of a turning point or something.

WEINTRAUB: Well, there were always things happening when we were there. When we were there, from 1980 to 1982, we had the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi reactor; we had the assassination of Anwar Sadat in Egypt; and we had the, after constant shelling from southern Lebanon, we had the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, all the way up to Beirut when the Palestine Liberation Organization, the PLO and Yasser Arafat, were exiled all the way to Tunisia. You know, the civil war in Lebanon had gone through the '70s, hostages were taken in Lebanon and of course the whole southern strip of Lebanon was in the hands either of the PLO or other terrorists groups; there was very little effective rule of the Lebanese government in southern Lebanon. There were a lot of refugee camps, other

settlements and there were cross border incursions all the time, there were incidents with settlements in Israel; one incident in the settlement of Ma'a lot in 1974, where the school was taken over, a lot of children were killed. And the border between Israel and Lebanon was always a hot spot, and eventually with rockets being shot into Israel, Israel decided they had to take action and then they invaded - that was in the summer of '82, shortly before we left.

Q: What was your job? You had several jobs?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I started in the visa section, continuing, so for the first year I was in the visa section. At this point the embassy was going under a lot of reconstruction, rehabilitation. It was in a situation where the Congress never gave the State Department enough funds to do a good job on fixing up and modernizing the embassy in Tel Aviv. This was because, as it had been expressed in numerous resolutions, the Congress wanted the embassy to be in Jerusalem to respond to a political wish, and it was the position of the administration, although every president in every campaign always said we would do our best -

Q: When they get to New York.

WEINTRAUB: Right. We will do our best to move the embassy to Jerusalem. Of course, when they got into power it was always “The status of Jerusalem remains to be settled, it's an object of dispute, we don't want to upset the issue.” So Congress would give a bare minimum of funds to refurbish the embassy in Israel and it looked it; it was a pretty shabby building. Inside it was like a rabbit warren of little offices and stairways, probably a fire hazard, I suspect. And in fact the visa section was physically separate several blocks away for most of the time I did consular work in Israel. Near the end of that year, however, an improved visa-processing section was reopened in the main embassy building. So I believe, if I'm not mistaken, that I was six months in the NIV line, in the non-immigrant visa line, then three months on immigrant visas, followed by three months with American

citizens services issuing new passports, issuing birth certificates, doing notarials, a lot of other issues of concern with American citizens living in Israel, or with visiting Americans who may have been arrested and put into prison, had emergencies, people who needed a passport and had to travel. And then the immigrant visa work was with people who had to go through the more elaborate procedure who wanted to emigrate legally to the United States.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

WEINTRAUB: The ambassador was Samuel Lewis, who ended up serving, I think, as ambassador either seven or eight years, I forget how many.

Q: Oh yes, yes.

WEINTRAUB: I think he had been there since maybe '77 or '78 so he was there for several years before and after I was there. Actually I see Ambassador Lewis occasionally in Washington these days.

Q: Well, let's take non-immigrant first. Who was- I mean, was this a standard thing or was there a problem of, you know, people particularly from that time, Soviet Union, would come into Israel, and then were they trying to peel off and go to the United States?

WEINTRAUB: Well, one thing I remember on the NIV line is that I formed kind of model of what your potential illegal immigrant would be and I found it to be quite different in my own mind with what it was in Colombia. I had the impression that in Colombia I was watching out particularly for people in the bottom on the socio-economic scale, people who didn't see a way out, people that didn't see a good future for themselves in Colombia, either through lack of education or maybe they came from a depressed class. These were the people who presumably would be the busboys, the dishwashers, the hairdressers, the manicurists, who would fill these kind of low-skilled entry service jobs in New York and other urban centers in the United States. So these were the people you had to watch

out for being illegal immigrants. People who had reasonable jobs, who had high school education, college education, could probably do well in Colombia and with any degree of success they would be able to hire a maid, if not a live-in at least a part-time maid, maybe a cook as well, and they could live fairly well.

It was my impression, in Israel, however, that it was not people on the bottom of the scale you had to watch out for illegal immigration; it was people in the middle. And by this I mean that for people in the bottom of the scale, first of all, geographically you were much further away. It wasn't like a flight and an hour-and-a-half you were in Miami where there was a welcoming community already for you. It was halfway around the world. And Israel, of course, had a much more developed social welfare network than in Colombia. Colombia, like most developing countries didn't have much in the way of a social welfare network; social security, you know, like the school system, didn't serve those of the lower classes very well. Israel was a much more egalitarian society, and it had a pretty good social welfare network, so people at the bottom didn't feel they had to escape. There were minimum wages and there was definitely more of a socio-economically integrated society, one that tended to look after its less fortunate; something of an attitude of “we're in this all together,” you know, we are the refugees; the flotsam and jetsam gathered from around the world, we help our people who need help. So people at the bottom didn't feel they had to escape or that there was no future in front of them.

It was my impression that for people starting out in the entrepreneurial sector, people who were businessmen, hustlers who wanted to succeed, and other very ambitious peoplfor these people, Israel just offered too small a landscape for them. This was a country of four, five million people. If you're an entrepreneur this was just too small and constraining an environment for you. There was nowhere to go. So these people could have connections in Europe, in the U.S. and it was my impression that these were the people who would be more likely to use a visitor's visa with intentions of becoming a U.S. resident. Now, they wouldn't fill the low level jobs, chances are they would find a way to adjust legally if that was possible; they wouldn't stay submerged in an underground economy because

they would be obviously fairly visible as entrepreneurs in the United States. Nevertheless, however, we were not there to encourage people to use the NIV route in order to later become a legal immigrant. There were ways to do that, obviously. So this was kind of the insight I developed into how you interviewed people in the non-immigrant visa line.

Q: Well, as an old consular officer myself, when you're dealing with a hustler in any country, they don't take no for an answer, particularly when you're coming to Israel where I understand controversy and debate is, you know, the pastime of everybody.

WEINTRAUB: It certainly is a very argumentative society, a society where people don't take no for an answer. And it never took place with real animus, debate was never- it was heated occasionally, but never with venom or vindictive. People knew you had the right and they respected you for that, and as long as you were honest and upfront, you know, that's the way things were. But the Israeli society, as I said, is like a hothouse, there's a lot of pressure, people become very argumentative by nature, and people don't like to be thwarted if they have an ambition like that.

Also in the NIV situation, some Soviet Jews had started to come there, the U.S. Jackson-Vanik legislation had helped emigration. Also when I was there, after the revolution in Iran, a lot of Iranian Jews had begun to arrive in Israel. There was a sizeable Jewish community in Iran, a lot of them quite wealthy, they had done very well under the shah, who had apparently encouraged people to be entrepreneurial, and they did quite well. But after the revolution in the fall of '79, large numbers, either before the revolution or shortly after when they were able to get out, did come out. Perhaps they had bank accounts overseas already, maybe they were able to get funds out anyway, but they were now living in Israel, Israel obviously accepted these people no questions asked, on the principle that they were emigrating to Israel. But then these people also, my impression is, felt a little bit in a straightjacket by the size of Israel and the scope it offered for business people and entrepreneurs.

Q: Yes, and it was basically a socialist society.

WEINTRAUB: It is very much. Israel was definitelit had characteristics of a socialist society, with very high income taxes and other things of that nature. And I guess there was a pretty sizeable Iranian Jewish community in Los Angeles and other parts of Southern California as well, so a lot of these people, they came with - I mean, they had bank accounts that I could never hope to amass and they could buy their way into the United States. If there was just a legal way to do it, they could do it and there were so-called, I don't know if they still have these, but the U.S. had a category of Investors Visas. And a lot of these people could do that at the drop of a hat. You bought into an American company or you were going to start an American company with the provision that you would offer employment to so many Americans, and you could get an Investors Visa that way. So it was quite a challenging environment - whether the former Soviet refuseniks, the #migr# Iranians, or the general mix of Israeli society, visa work was endlessly fascinating.

I remember one fellow - we also had to be aware of the pattern of Israeli society, with young people just getting out of the military service. You know, they might have four years of very tough military service and there's a pattern in Israeli society that after military service they go hitchhiking around the world. It's called a “tramp,” and it's quite a tradition. So they go for a “tramp.” And these people are usually very well grounded in Israeli society, and there's usually not much anxiety about them not returning, particularly if they had good service in the military, essential for- very helpful for a career in Israeli society. So young, single people, without a great deal of assets in a country like Bogot# - in Colombia, you might be very suspicious about such people for visa purposes. In Israel, probably not as much. But you always had to talk to people.

So I remember one fellow who had just finished his service in the military, and he brings a new passport in for a U.S. visa, and I said well, “Where are you going? And, typically, these people would crash in youth hostels, with friends, or with other Israelis scattered all over the United States. I said, being a bit of a tease, “You know, you've never been to the

United States, it's very expensive. Where are you going to go?" He offered me some story, like, "We have ways, there are Israelis all over, I can find out." And I said, "Have you ever had a passport before this one?" He said, "No I haven't." I said, "You've never even been outside of Israel. How do you know, how do I know you're going to be able to get along; you won't have a problem in the United States?" So he looks at me with a conspiratorial look and he says, "I've been outside this country; where I went I didn't need a visa to go to." Obviously he'd been in Lebanon. So, there were always interesting stories.

Even in Colombia, though somewhat of less variety than in Israel, we had a lot of Foreign Service nationals working in the visa section. It was very interesting to me that the local employees we had - what a variety of conditions or countries they'd come from. In Israel, for example, some were second or third generation Israelis - they came from Russia, from Iraq, from Iran, and many other countries. I mean, it was a fantastic experience to see these people working all together. So it was quite an enjoyable experience.

Q: Well, Leon, Israel is an interesting society and it has a relatively small, really orthodox community and you get at the airport you see guys in the typical whatever the outfit is, the hat and the-

WEINTRAUB: The long black coat.

Q: Long black coat and all that. And apparently these are two different societies that don't quite even really almost live in the same- I mean, the same mental thing. How did you find dealing with, or did you deal with the orthodox, I'm talking about the really orthodox community?

WEINTRAUB: Well, obviously the really orthodox community doesn't mix very much outside of its own community so there were certain areas, sectors or neighborhoods of Jerusalem or Tel Aviv where they tend to live. They obviously like to be within, or they

have to be within walking distance of a synagogue since they don't drive on the Sabbath. And obviously they don't take an active part in public service, in the government so-

Q: Or military service either, do they?

WEINTRAUB: Some “modern” orthodox do but the “ultra” orthodox typically don't, they're exempt from military service, which creates a certain amount of resentment, of course, within Israeli society. But there are other elements within the total orthodox community where, in fact, the youth do serve in the military. So in most embassy work one would not meet typically these ultra orthodox people. They have their businesses, their shops and they like to keep to themselves. There is a religious party in Israel and in my second year as political officer I met with people from the religious party, and those people who were the party officers were somewhat on the secular side of the spectrum. They held secular office and they met with diplomats as well; they did not wear the black hats and that typical outfit, so to speak. But it was a very different society and even the Israelis talked about them as “the black hats.” Often, when there were certain occasions, whether there was a marriage between two families in this society or some other occasion, a funeral, perhaps, the streets would be full of a sea of these people, it looked like a march of the penguins, all you saw was the black and white, the white shirts and the black jackets and black hats. But a significant number of Israelis thought these people received undue deference from the government of the day, whether it was subsidizing of the religious schools - even “secular” schools had to obey certain constraints about which holidays to observe - or whether the airport could be open on Saturday for servicing non-El Al flights. The fact that El Al could not fly on Saturday, that was a given, but whether the airport should be open to receive flights from Air France or anyone else, was, it seemed, always a point of contention. In short, there was a constant state of tension in society.

Q: Well, visa-wise, was there sort of an automatic giving an orthodox a visa or not or how did that work? I'm talking about non-immigrant.

WEINTRAUB: Well, not necessarily. I guess one could be more likely to view them with a more positive outlook as a visa applicant. Generally they were fairly established. One didn't see these people as engaging in entrepreneurial activity; they seemed to be fairly settled, have large families at a fairly young age. But often if they were involved in import-exports, some of them may have been involved in the diamond trade. Israel had a diamond cutting or diamond polishing sector.

Q: Up in Amsterdam too.

WEINTRAUB: Amsterdam as well, and of course there is the diamond center in New York where you see a lot of the black hat guys working on 5th Avenue. So there was a trade and you had to recognize that. But, you know, you couldn't give them a pass, they had to meet the requirements.

Q: Well, how did you find being Jewish in the business of handing out something that people wanted, as is true of all visa officers? At one point I know, and I don't know when they had stopped it, but I go back quite a ways, it was policy not to assign Jewish officers to Israel because the feeling that there would be undue pressure put on them.

WEINTRAUB: Yes, I think -

Q: This is true of some other nationalities too.

WEINTRAUB: Right, I think that - I don't know when that policy ended, but it was obviously not in effect when I was there. In fact, there were other Jewish officers at the embassy when I was there.

Q: So it was no longer even an issue, you weren't breaking ground or anything.

WEINTRAUB: No, no, no, not at all, not at all. And some of the visa applicants, you know, would see my name on the plaque next to the window and they would say, “Oh, you're

Jewish?" And they might try to use that as an "in" to try to curry favor, perhaps - but for most people it was immaterial, you were just another American; they just saw you as a representative - as a vice consul of the United States. I can't say that many people tried to use that as a point to use favors in the visa process.

Q: I know I was in the consul general in Athens at one time and we had some Greek Americans, you know, officers and all that would try to pull some- but you know, an American is an American is an American.

WEINTRAUB: Yes, I think so, I think so. We have to do our job and in the immigrant visa section we still, you know, have to go through things quite completely. I remember, there was a case where one fellow, he was going to be getting a visa as an immigrant to be an auto mechanic and I wasn't aware that there were shortages of auto mechanics. But some potential employer had filled out all the work and gotten approval through the Department of Labor that in fact there was a shortage in this category and yes, it was legal, but of course I didn't have any way of assessing, in fact, the man's skills as an auto mechanic. In other words, the paperwork in the U.S. was done, but we had to be convinced that the applicant could fill the job position. So I got the head of the motor pool to have a chat with this guy and it turned out I ended up refusing the fellow. The head mechanic of the motor pool said, well, maybe I'd trust him to change the oil in my car but not much more than that. So again, with the local employees who might be subject to bribes or pressure, whatever, to help out a fellow compatriot, a fellow Jew, Israel obviously has its problems of corruption like any society. But it's a fairly open society, and it's a fairly honest and hardworking society, I think.

Q: How about, particularly when you moved over to American services, how did you find the American Jewish community? I mean, there were two elements, one were the ones that came over to settle and the other one was the normal tourist.

WEINTRAUB: Well, as far as the tourists, I really had little to do with them. They rarely need to come to the embassy for anything, for any service. But the settlers were a mixed bag. Sometimes you had the very orthodox who had to come in to renew a passport, perhaps, or get a birth certificate for one of their children stating that he or she was an American citizen born overseas. One of them, I remember, came in the morning and said - after he looked at my name - he said, “Oh are you Jewish?” And I said “Yes.” And he looked at me and said, “Did you say the morning prayers this morning?” I said, “No, as a matter of fact, I skipped it this morning.” He then says, “Well, I have the prayer shawl with me and I have the book, we could do it now if you'd like.” I said I didn't think this was the time and the place to do it and I would try to take care of it another time. There were other people who just, while they're waiting for me — maybe their passport had expired and they're waiting for me to go through procedures to issue them a new passport, — they start a conversation and might say, “Oh, you're Jewish, did you ever think of settling here?” And it was just friendly conversation. There was some concern at the time, a fair amount of concern, actually, from Americans who settled in Israel for whatever indeterminate time that was, and received a notice to serve in the Israel army, in the military. There was a degree of anxiety about whether this would make them lose their American citizenship. And I guess there was a time when service in another military-

Q: It had, I think it was the Schneider Decision came out.

WEINTRAUB: I don't know when that was.

Q: But that was in the, I think in the '70s.

WEINTRAUB: Well, this was in the early '80s. But it takes a time for that to filter through. And apparently the way the Israeli legislation was written, these people didn't volunteer for the military, they were drafted.

Q: Yes, and that made a difference.

WEINTRAUB: That made a difference, and also with receiving Israeli citizenship. This was at the time when I think the U.S. only in certain limited circumstances allowed dual nationalities. It's not as easy as it is now with dual nationalities. And people were concerned that if they had an Israeli passport they would they lose their American citizenship. You know, there was quite a bit of anxiety about this as well. And also the Israeli citizenship law apparently was written with this at least partly in mind in that if you were a settler, a Jewish settler, you did not have to apply for citizenship, you did not have to take such an affirmative act. Rather, such citizenship was awarded to you based on the fact that you had lived there for a certain time. You had to “opt out” of it if you did not want it, rather than make an application to receive it. So that way people could preserve their dual nationality. So there were a lot of these issues that I came to deal with.

One interesting case was some fellow who came to me from the orthodox community when I was in American services. It was in the spring I guess of 1982. No, no, of '81, at the end of my first year, I was in American services. It was probably maybe a few weeks before the Passover holiday. And he saw my name, asked if I was Jewish, and then said, “Oh, are you observing Passover?” And I said, “Yes, of course.” And he asked me was I going to use a certain type of matzo, the unleavened bread required for observance of the holiday. Now, there is the typical unleavened bread kosher for Passover that one can buy in the supermarket. It's packaged and it's manufactured and it's fully kosher, fully accepted for Passover. However, the ultra-orthodox may not really like that so they have a certain type of matzo [“matzah 'shmurah,'" or “Watched Matzah”] that they really like and it's all handmade and it's watched over to ensure that the water and the flour don't mix for over a certain amount of time before it's baked — so to ensure that the mixture does not rise more than a certain amount, and can still be considered unleavened. So it really meets the code. So he asked me would I like some of this “matzah shmurah” for my Passover celebration. Oh, I said, sure, it would be an honor for me. What am I going to say, no I don't want? Sure, it would be an honor for me. He said okay, I'll come back tomorrow. So he brings me a box and it's, it's somewhat on the tasteless side, actually.

Q: Yes, I think library paste is a pretty good description.

WEINTRAUB: It's a circular matzo versus a square matzo that one buys in the stores and it's not meant to have a taste but it's meant for ritual purity to be out there. So of course next year he came to the embassy again and I got it, and I'll be darned if several assignments afterward he didn't follow me through the mail and “Watched Matzah” would arrive at other posts, unbidden. Somehow he was able to get my address. But he saw this as doing a good deed.

So I had some interesting discussions with people.

Q: Now, did you, particularly when you were doing sort of the consular business, did you get anything from either Gaza or the West Bank?

WEINTRAUB: No, those were all handled through the consulate in Jerusalem. The consulate in Jerusalem tended to be viewed, if you will, kind of as a sub rosa “embassy” for the U.S. to relate to the Palestinians. So it's a consulate in Jerusalem with a unique status. Officially, I think the consulate reports back to Washington directly, rather than through the embassy in Tel Aviv, and the consul general in Jerusalem — I'm not sure jurisdictionally if the consul general is under the authority of the American ambassador in Israel.

Q: I don't think they think they are.

WEINTRAUB: Now, obviously there's a lot of coordination, and every week when the embassy held the country team meeting the consul general was there. Obviously, they worked together, but unlike, for example in my last post in Colombia, where we had a consul general in Medellin or in Barranquilla. These two officials obviously reported to the ambassador in Bogot#, in that this is one country. But the status of the West Bank obviously was different, since we did not recognize and still don't Israeli jurisdiction over the complete West Bank. Therefore, the consulate was not a constituent sub-post of the

American embassy in Tel Aviv. So we in Tel Aviv did not do visa work for Palestinians who wanted to travel; they went to the consulate in Jerusalem. As far as Arab Americans who may have settled in Israel proper, such as in Haifa, we did have a consular agent in Haifa and they probably did go there. We probably got a small number who needed to come to the embassy for services. There were a small number of Arab Americans who came and we serviced them as any other American citizen.

Q: While you were- did you get involved in any prison problems or anything like that?

WEINTRAUB: Interesting, prison issues. There was a syndrome of behavior, I think, probably from some middle- to upper-income Jewish families in the United States, we discovered, where the kid wasn't turning out right, typically a male, a teenager, 18 or 19. The kid wasn't doing well in school, maybe got a little bit into drugs in the United States, so the thing was, well, we'll ship the kid off to Israel, they'll straighten him out, they're a tough bunch over there. You know, he'll live on a kibbutz; he'll do something, whatever.

Q Dry him out, the whole thing.

WEINTRAUB: Dry him, out, yes; there were a few instances of these kind of situations. And we had a few cases where those kids did not get dried out. Obviously they did not have to serve in the military, of course, they weren't there long enough to become citizens but the idea was somehow they would absorb through osmosis this Israeli kind of straight and tough upbringing. So there were a few of those that were hung out and were arrested for trying to deal in drugs or smuggle in drugs, and we had to visit them and see that they got whatever services the embassy could offer - we had to get in touch with their families; there were a few instances of those.

Q: But police problems weren't much of a problem for you?

WEINTRAUB: No, no, not particularly. I mean, Israel has a respected police force that I think respects the public and typically our security people always had very good relations with the police. Not a particular problem of any kind.

Q: Well then you moved over after a year, you moved to what, a political assignment?

WEINTRAUB: I moved into the political section and, since this was only my second assignment overseas and this was my first real assignment as a political officer, I was kind of the low man on the totem pole in the political section. I had a portfolio which was Israeli external relations and also the beginning of the so-called “normalization process” with Egypt. This was after - I remember it from when I was back in Bogot# - after the Camp David agreement. It was signed with the strong encouragement of President Jimmy Carter.

Q: Yes.

WEINTRAUB: ...the Camp David agreement, and also in '77, I believe it was, the visit of President of Egypt Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem. So this was unheard of, this opened up a whole new era and eventually, of course, led to the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt and the process for the withdrawal of Israel from the Sinai. When we arrived, Israel still had all the Sinai, and Israeli tour groups were operating tour groups to Sharm El Sheik all the way through the Sinai Peninsula just as if it would have been Israel, you know. It was very traumatic for Israel, the withdrawal from the Sinai — some of the same process they're going through now with withdrawal from Gaza.

Q: Yes, I remember seeing fighting around-

WEINTRAUB: Around the settlement of Yamit. It was the settlement of Yamit, and Ariel Sharon, the current prime minister, was the military commander in charge of that withdrawal from that settlement in the Sinai. (end of side two, tape three)

Q: This is tape four, side one with Leon Weintraub. Yes.

WEINTRAUB: So now this was probably the fall of '81 and Israel was gingerly in steps withdrawing from the Sinai and there were Egyptian diplomats stationed in Israel and this was quite a novelty. Israel had a diplomatic mission in Cairo; this was also a novelty. Also, Israel was making some progress in reestablishing relations with a lot of sub-Saharan African countries. In the '60s and early '70s Israel had very large diplomatic representation in sub-Saharan Africa. They were doing a lot of aid projects, irrigation, agriculture, that was very helpful to a lot of sub-Saharan African countries. Well, after the Six Day War and then after the '73 war, the Yom Kippur War, the Arabs really got their act together. They had the oil embargo, of course, and they really put the screws to a lot of sub-Saharan African countries, saying if you want help from us — and they were flush with oil money at the time — they had to sever relations with Israel. So most of sub-Saharan African countries in the early '70s to the mid '70s severed relations with Israel. And this was somewhat of a blow for Israel.

By this time, in the late '70s and early '80s, Israel was saying to these countries, “Look, if Egypt can establish relations with us, Egypt, the fountainhead for much of the Arab world, the leading Arab country, the one we were at war with, if they can establish relations with us, why can't you and this country or that country?” It was an exciting time in that regard. I wouldn't say there were major earthshaking events, but for Israel this was important that some of the sub-Saharan countries were reestablishing relations with Israel again. So this was an interesting part of the portfolio. And of course the normalization with Egypt as well. And while I was not, so to speak, a legislative watcher, a watcher of the Knesset in internal Israeli politics as others were, nevertheless I did get to speak to members of the Knesset, members of the parliament who were watching international affairs. So I got to mix with different levels of Israeli society that I didn't meet during the visa year.

Q: I don't know if it would have applied to someone of Jewish extraction, in fact other people who were not of Jewish extraction said they always had the feeling that someone-

that people were keeping book on American embassy officers, are they with us or against us and you know, it was-.

WEINTRAUB: You mean the Israelis were keeping book?

Q: Yes, yes. Did you get this feeling?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, no doubt about it. Israel is very, you know — I think it was Henry Kissinger who said, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean people aren't out to get you. And Israel has had very paranoid kind of tendencies. A beleaguered society can't be sure who's with them or who's not. The French were with them up to a point, and then they let them go. In the '73 war Nixon hung them out for a long time before eventually we supplied Israel with military equipment.

Let me give you an example of one incident. I remember, we were driving, my family and I, from Tel Aviv to Eilat. On the way down, we kind of took the main route, from Tel Aviv through Jerusalem down to the Red Sea and then straight down in a beeline from the Red Sea down to Eilat, a very nice area on the Red Sea and it's kind of a big resort area. Well, on the way back we decided to be a bit more adventurous and take more of a direct route, kind of the hypotenuse of the triangle, and we went through the Negev Desert, through the city of Be'er Sheva. It's a paved road but it's not a busy road at all, and we wanted to see a different part of the country.

Well apparently, at one point, you know, it's pretty hot driving through the desert, I have two young kids in there and one of the kids was a bit carsick and we needed to stop. So we stopped on some undistinguishable hill, a piece of ground, and let the kids walk around a little bit. Not within three minutes later an Israeli military jeep comes out from nowhere, I don't know where they come from, and a soldier gets out and he says, “Are you okay? What's your problem?” So I explained the situation, we're traveling with the kids, who I am, I have diplomatic license plates on my car. And he says “Oh, okay, I just wanted to check.” And he gets back in the jeep and goes somewhere, he disappears behind some

hills somewhere. So there's no doubt they are watching. And even though by this time Israel and the U.S. were very strong, had very strong alliances and very strong links, that by no means did not- no one received a pass.

Q: Yes.

WEINTRAUB: And obviously just by a diplomatic license plate they didn't know if you were Jewish or not, that made no difference. But even if you were American or not, that made no difference. And certainly if Europeans — you know, they had their suspicions of French and others. So, and also if you were an American Jew you were, as far as they were concerned you were an American, you were an American and you represented the United States. And it really didn't make that much of a difference to them.

Q: Had the Jonathan Pollard case come up while you were there?

WEINTRAUB: No, that was later.

Q: Later.

WEINTRAUB: That was later. As a matter of fact, when - we'll get to it later when I was the INR analyst for Israel at the time, some time later.

Q: I do want to talk, that's a fascinating case.

WEINTRAUB: But you know, I occasionally went to religious services, we had our third child in Israel, a daughter in Israel. Probably though, interesting from a perspective of an American Jew in the Foreign Service, I didn't get as close to the Jewish society of Israel as I did in Colombia to the Jewish community in Colombia. Of course, the Jewish community in Colombia, they were a minority, a distinct minority. They had their own social events, they had a country club - I'm sure started like a lot of Jewish country clubs in the United States because they couldn't get into American-

Q: They were excluded.

WEINTRAUB: Right, they were excluded from American country clubs. So I fit in in that circle in Colombia very well as a welcome member. But in Israel everybody's Jewish so it's no big deal. We lived in a residential area, in a neighborhood. I mean, we were welcome as any young family with young children would be, but I didn't get the feeling that people went out of their way to invite us to holidays or anything else because we were Jewish because everybody was Jewish in the area.

Q: While you were there, was there any angst or whatever you want to call it, concern, expressed by the embassy officers and all about the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza?

WEINTRAUB: Well, it's something you're always aware of. The really large scale bombings, suicide bombings hadn't occurred yet. Mainly the acts were acts of terrorism coming over the Jordan River, coming from Lebanon, incursions from Gaza into Israel; it hadn't reached the level where there was great angst - you could travel, for the most part, even through the West Bank. I'm trying to remember - I mean, we went to the Dead Sea, we went to Nazareth, we went to other places; but I guess I don't recall specifically traveling to the West Bank. I think maybe you had to advise people at the embassy you were going to do it, the embassy wanted to know who was on the West Bank.

Q: Actually what I'm thinking about was there concern on the part of embassy officers about, I don't know if you want to call it the plight of the, I mean it was an occupation and the hand of the Israelis was pretty heavy on the Palestinians at the time. And later it became, you know, a matter and remains one of great world concern. But at that time was there much thought about this?

WEINTRAUB: Well, there was, I think it was there as part of - on everyone's mind, it was the backdrop for almost everything we did. Obviously the conflict in Jerusalem occupied

much of the time of everyone at the embassy. Probably at senior levels I expect there was regular discussion between the ambassador and the prime minister, leading members of parliament, the defense ministry; I think at this period the occupation forces in the West Bank were still somewhat light. I think, you know, you didn't have the first Intifada, which took place in '86, '87.

Q: That really kicked, I mean, that was the first time-

WEINTRAUB: So at this point, I think, there was a kind of a coexistence of sorts, people were getting along together, Palestinians could work fairly easily in Israel, Israelis were setting up businesses in the West Bank, people were working together, there were some joint businesses, joint ventures. One knew it couldn't go on forever like this, but the border between the West Bank and Israel proper was nothing like it is now.

Q: Well, as a political officer, were there any issues that you particular engaged or crises or problems?

WEINTRAUB: Well as I said, my focus was African countries for the most part. I remember one amusing issue: Zaire was going to reopen an embassy in Israel. And I think the Israelis at the time had convinced Zaire diplomats to open their embassy in Jerusalem rather than Tel Aviv because, after all. “Jerusalem is our capital.” I don't recall at the time if the government of Zaire was even aware that most embassies in Israel were in Tel Aviv because of the “indeterminate” status of Jerusalem. So this was seen as quite a coup, that another embassy would be opening in Jerusalem rather than in Tel Aviv, where most of the Western Europeans were. I think the ones in Jerusalem were mainly Central American and South American embassies that never bothered to move. I remember talking to someone in the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs, the director of African affairs, and he was so concerned that during a press conference that some of the Israeli press shouldn't raise embassy location as an issue with the ambassador from Zaire - hoping they would not ask “Why are you going into Jerusalem and not in Tel Aviv?” I'm not sure whatever happened,

but I remember the official was kind of nervous about the press conference and hoped the ambassador from Zaire wasn't aware that there was an alternative to opening the embassy in Jerusalem.

Q: Well this is probably a good place to stop. And if anything occurs to you before we meet again on this Israel time we'll pick it, otherwise-

WEINTRAUB: I'd like to do that, say a few more things about Israel.

Q: Alright. Do you want to mention here what you'd like?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, there was a trip I made to Taba that was kind of interesting at the time of the turnover. And also something interesting I found out about the advisories, the kind of notes about the local population, which I thought interesting, about how American embassy officials should behave on certain holidays, for example. I found that kind of amusing.

Q: Okay. Good. Did you get involved in the human rights report or anything like that?

WEINTRAUB: No, I didn't.

Q: Okay, today is the 2nd of August, 2005. Leon, we're still in Israel. You were in Israel from when to when now?

WEINTRAUB: Summer of '80 until the summer of '82.

Q: Alright. You mentioned a trip to Taba.

WEINTRAUB: Well, this was after the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. And of course there was much angst in Israel and much reporting by the embassy on the withdrawal from the settlements in the Sinai, just as there is right now in August 2005 about the withdrawal from the Gaza, a very similar situation. Anyway, the withdrawal

was taking place from the Sinai, it happened in stages, and now this was about the final withdrawal. As the political officer covering “normalization” with Egypt, I made a trip, obviously under official embassy auspices, down to Taba in the Sinai, which is not to far from the Israeli port city of Eilat on the Red Sea. As a matter of fact, as I recall I was able to use a car from the embassy motor pool and drive it down there myself. And Taba has since become the site of several meetings, international meetings between Egypt and Israel. Anyway, there was a lot of attention focused on the area, and there were a lot of observers of one kind or another, monitoring the turnover.

Somehow - I'm not quite sure how it happened - word had not gotten through to all the appropriate channels that in fact I was making this trip - although as I mentioned I had an embassy vehicle, and my supervisor had obviously approved it. But somehow word got back to the American embassy and then eventually it got back to me that there was some concern, I don't know if it was by the United Nations or the Egyptian authorities, that someone there claiming to represent the American embassy was out snooping around and holding a series of conversations. This person was meeting with people, with Egyptians and Israelis, finding out what was happening about the withdrawal, and there was a certain amount of concern about who this person might be and what he might represent. And my supervisor, in a telephone chat as I recall, raised this issue with me and I said. “Gee, that sure sounds like me, doesn't it?”

So I thought it was interesting in that no matter how carefully one makes preparations to do something - anything - sometime something happens that is unexpected. There might be unusual circumstances or tense circumstances, but one can never overdo the job of preparing the groundwork just to make that everyone is onboard. And this never became a diplomatic incident of any kind, it certainly didn't reach that level, but nevertheless, it involved me personally - because of the fact that some people who perhaps should have known about my being there did not know. I don't know where there was a gap in someone

informing someone else, but I thought that was kind of interesting. I thought, as I had the conversation with my boss, “Gee, that sure sounds like what I was doing, doesn't it?”

Q: And then you mentioned the-

WEINTRAUB: About the behavior of the locals and how to make sure you don't ruffle any feathers in the host country. As you're aware, embassies typically send out notes, you know, like in a weekly embassy newsletter, whenever there could be anticipated demonstrations. In some of the countries where we lived, demonstrations could and often did turn violent, especially whenever there was a particular national holiday. So anytime there was anything of significant import that could affect movement in public areas, such as any public demonstration, the embassy typically puts this information out in the weekly embassy newsletter. Well, of course in Israel on Yom Kippur, on the Day of Atonement, which is the holiest day of the year in the Jewish calendar, there is no - I mean the only thing people are supposed to do is get up and go to synagogue, maybe visit with your neighbors, strolling, but of course, there is no work of any kind, and that includes no use of motor vehicles. Obviously it is a national holiday, all work is supposed to cease - and does in Israel - and this is how the day is observed. Of course, Jewish people also observe the holiday that way in the United States, do their best to do it as they wish and of course, the world continues on around them. But of course in Israel this is a national holiday, a national event.

So the embassy sent out in their weekly newsletter before Yom Kippur a note describing the holiday and advising people, in fact, probably warning would not be too strong a word, not to use your car, do not go in your car on the street. The only vehicles allowed on the street are ambulances and if you're in certain religious areas your vehicle might get stoned. And this happened all the time in certain sections of Jerusalem even on regular Saturdays, on the Sabbath day, when you were warned to avoid certain ultra Orthodox neighborhoods. Driving through them from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday you

risk getting a rock through your windshield, whereas on Yom Kippur this could happen anywhere all over the country and one had to be aware of this.

So there was this kind of note explaining the importance of the holiday and why people had to be aware of this. And I just thought, you know, when we see something like this describing a culture different from our own, you know, one sees it kind of as an anthropological note. For example, in certain African societies there might be certain rituals or functions, so you have to behave in a certain way - this is what the natives do and you have to beware, don't go into this section of the neighborhood. And you kind of accept that. But this was describing things I did, you know, this was describing me. So I kind of got a kick out of that. And you know it shows how what you sometimes think of as exotic when describing the rituals or customs of another society in almost anthropological-type terms, like “this is what the natives do” and they believe this and you have to observe it, in that type of a tone. I'm sure it wasn't meant to be in a patronizing tone, but the way it was describing it came across as almost like a clinical and anthropological study or description and I just — it kind of affected me because, I thought, “Hey, that's me they're talking about.” I thought that was kind of interesting.

Q: Well, did you have any anthropologists come and talk to you about your customs, speaking slowly in English?

WEINTRAUB: No, it was fine, and certainly it was written in a way, I'm sure, to be respectful of the local society and make sure that people didn't get in trouble and perhaps put the embassy in a bad light for failing to observe -

Q: Did you- what, into anything that I've noticed over the years that there often- maybe this happened more later than when you were later, incidents between particularly the military and the police where they seemed to have used undue force or something and the immediate response is, well, we were attacked or, in other words, they get very defensive and usually in later accounts you find out well, that's not the real story. And I've learned

to sort of treat things that came out of Israel the same way I treat things that came out of almost any Middle Eastern country—don't believe what the official announcement is, wait until, you know, it was pretty defensive reaction.

WEINTRAUB: Well, obviously the Israelis were very suspicious of most diplomats. There were incidents on record where certain diplomatic vehicles were used to smuggle weapons and dangerous supplies into the Palestinians. Some cases may in fact may have been real diplomatic vehicles and in other cases maybe the Palestinians had forged diplomatic license plates. The Israelis were quite wary and I wouldn't be surprised if occasionally the soldiers were more brusque than diplomats would have liked. I think I mentioned earlier when we were driving through a certain section of the Negev and we had stopped because one of my kids wasn't feeling well. Within five minutes there were two jeeps - one jeep or two jeeps around us - asking us if everything was alright. Obviously, it seemed to me, there was a listening post somewhere around there. And of course there are a lot of stories about Palestinians having to wait hours and hours at a checkpoint, being subject to harassment or humiliation, but, you know, as you've said, there's often another side of the story that has to be heard.

You know, when you're in a society that is subject to suicide bombings of innocent civilians, whether on the bus or in restaurants or in hotels, a society has to take measures necessary to defend itself. In the meanwhile, if the debate is political, Israel is a very contentious society, it is not a particularly gracious society, even amongst the Israelis. It's the language, as a matter of fact this was- it even goes back to the Hebrew language training of a few years ago. I mentioned that one of our best students in the language class was a U.S. military officer who had previously served, I think, in Yemen and he knew Arabic. And he contrasted the two languages where Arabic is a language that is not in a hurry to do anything. I don't know Arabic myself but it's flowery, it tends to be poetic, there are a lot of introductions and phrases of courtesy involved in the language. Hebrew is not like that. It's sharp, direct, straight to the point. And that kind of describes the society as well. There's a good fit between the language, the way people speak and the way they

behave. So I think some of that, what you describe may be over-sensitivity, and certain segments of the society, perhaps in the military in Israel, do walk around with a chip on their shoulder. I think they feel they have to just make sure no one gets a message either first-hand, second-hand, directly or indirectly that this is a country that's going to be a pushover.

Q: Okay. You left Israel when?

WEINTRAUB: As I said it would be in the summer of '82, shortly after the Israelis went into Lebanon in response to rockets being fired from southern Lebanon into settlements in northern Israel.

Q: I thought it was in response to the attempted assassination of the Israeli ambassador in London.

WEINTRAUB: That happened as well. My chronology on all these events is not too clear. That maybe was the last straw.

Q: They got tied together.

WEINTRAUB: Right. I think most of it was increasing numbers of rocket attacks from southern Lebanon.

Q: Was there, while you were there, was there, I'm not sure, again, the timing, but you know, this was supposedly in response to rockets being fired into settlements and yet- and they kept- the Israeli army kept going, I mean, it turned out that Sharon was maybe, basically running a rogue operation all the way to Beirut. Were you there when they got close to Beirut?

WEINTRAUB: I think I had already left, but I remember there was - but I remember I was still there when the troops were continuing to move up north. I remember there was considerable debate and discussion within the embassy and also in the media, in the

popular press in Israel, a very active and free press in Israel, there was considerable discussion whether the government knew this all along, whether this was an approved plan or whether General Sharon, who had pretty much a well-deserved reputation for doing things his way, whether in fact this was something he took advantage of and he exploited without getting full cabinet approval. I mean, he was a commander on the ground and was given a certain amount of leeway. So I remember this was a subject for endless debate.

Q: Well then, in '82 where did you go?

WEINTRAUB: We were transferred to embassy Lagos. We had a home leave, of course. Arrived in Lagos, I'm not sure when, probably late August or early September. I remember people in embassy Israel were kind of surprised I put this high on my bid list and in fact I was fairly happy about being assigned to embassy Lagos. Embassy Lagos had a pretty strong reputation of being one of the more undesirable posts in the Foreign Service but with my previous background — Peace Corps volunteer in Liberia, doctorate research in Sierra Leone, some African area studies types of courses at the undergraduate and graduate level — I wanted to get back to Africa. As I mentioned earlier, I had not accepted the offer for my first assignment to be kind of the ambassador's executive assistant in Freetown, Sierra Leone, but I thought if one was going to go back to Africa, one wanted to go back to the 900 pound gorilla in the neighborhood. And if you were going to be in West Africa and you wanted someone to pay attention to what you were doing in addition to the desk officer, this was the place to be. So I was quite happy with that assignment.

Q: You were there from when, from '82 to when?

WEINTRAUB: '82 until the summer of '84. It was a summer transfer cycle, from '82 to '84.

Q: What was your job?

WEINTRAUB: I think I had a very good assignment. I was one of the officers in the political section. I had main responsibility for the internal politics, the political parities and the legislature. This was a time after a number of coups in Nigerian history. There had been elections in 1979. The first of the military coups was in '66, then there were a succession of coups, one following pretty closely after another. Finally in 1979 the then-military rulewho in fact is the current president of Nigeria right now, Obasanjpresided over elections. There were elections in '79 and we went there in '82. So this was a window in Nigeria's long and checkered history when there was a democratically elected government; whether the elections were free and fair is another subject. But they were operating under a government with an elected president and a parliament. So I went there to follow human rights, the legislature and the political parties.

Q: Who was our ambassador at the time?

WEINTRAUB: The ambassador when I got there was Mr. Pickering. Tom Pickering was our ambassador.

Q: What- how would you describe the situation? You said there had been a freely elected president and all. How would you describe sort of the situation politically and economically in Nigeria at that time?

WEINTRAUB: Well, there had been, as I recall in the late '70s and early '80s, there had been a significant downturn in the price of oil. By this time oil was accounting for, I believe, over 90 percent of Nigeria's export earnings, so the government was kind of in a funk, economically. Things, expenses had to be cut. One heard endless stories, particularly from those in the economic section working on the commercial end, of all the rampant bribery and corruption in Nigeria and these were consistent with everything else you'd ever heard, so you had no reason to suspect it was not true. Similarly in the government's awarding of contracts, in almost anything that took place in the political sphere, one was met with a lack of transparency and things that were not going too straight.

Apparently, in order to control the use of foreign exchange, most goods were imported under import licenses and when one wanted to import certain goods one had to apply to the central bank to purchase hard currency in order to pay for your imports. So this created a position where people could be, in economic terms, “rent seeking.” So what I mean by that is typically when these licenses for importing certain equipment were prepared or given, word was that the majority of licenses went to politicians. They controlled the licenses for imports. And then what they did is any legitimate businessman who in fact wanted to import - whether it was construction equipment, electrical equipment, heavy machinery, automobile parts - whatever it may have been, a legitimate businessman would have to go to the politician who had the license and enter into a kind of partnership deal where the politician would be the silent partner, if you will, who would get a certain percent of the business just for allowing the license to be used. And there were apparently endless ways in which the politicians would work the system.

Obviously, our advice, of course, was to open the economy, a free market economy was the best way for the country to prosper, but it was apparent that a lot of people were not so much interested in the country prospering as in themselves prospering. So there were all kinds of stories always about licensing and contract competition in a way that favored those that had, favored those who already were part of the elite structure.

Q: Well, just in the last few days the former king of Saudi Arabia Fahd died and one is struck by they had a controlled system in Saudi Arabia that at the same time it delivered a hell of a lot to the people but you know, I mean, universities, clean cities, all sorts of things. And then you look at Nigeria where I've never been there but I'm told that very little got delivered really to the people and I mean really mostly ended up in the pockets of the crooks.

WEINTRAUB: Well, the, you know, the comparison is that in certain other countries that were characterized by corruption, things got done but they got done at 50 percent over the cost of what they should have been done. So bridges were built, roads were built, the

corruption was that the inflated prices that went into the pockets of certain people. Nigeria was the worst system where you had the corruption, you had the payoff but things never got done. So a construction company backed by a politician would get the contract, they'd buy a certain amount of equipment, start a certain amount of the project and then suddenly the business would go bankrupt and the funds would be gone. And this type of pattern was repeated over and over and over. I mean, this is how that kind of corruption compared to corruption in other places.

Q: Well, one of the things that anybody, I mean, it used to be sort of within the Foreign Service and international community but now taking to the use of the Internet, the multitude of ways that, taking Nigerian immigrants and people in Nigerian can manipulate systems, banking systems, the Internet, what have you, as scams, to get money out of people and deliver nothing, is renown, and in Nigerian, Nigerians, you know, if you see a Nigerian you want to zip up your wallet. Was that the feeling when you were there?

WEINTRAUB: Well, there was a saying within the expatriate community at the time that the way to make a small fortune in Nigeria is to start out with a large fortune. The Nigerians are just very industrious, very energetic, very intellectually active and bright; in a way they got a tremendous inheritance from the British when they left, they left fairly good universities in a number of places within Nigeria; a reasonably educated and intelligent civil service, particularly at the middle and senior levels; good professional people; good and capable people in the law, in medicine; good business people.

As I said, most of the other countries in that part of the world West Africa, are much smaller in size, much smaller in population, and less well-endowed with natural resources. Those other countries if I may use a phrase, kind of know their place in the international arena. Countries like Niger or Burkina Faso, or Guinea or Sierra Leone or Togo, Ghana or even Cote d'Ivoire — they know they play very modes roles in world events, and the politicians and the people at large tend to be more humble, more deferential, if you will, to the wishes of the international community. They tend to listen with a great deal of

respect to what the United States has to say, what the UK has to say, what other major world powers have to say. They tend to rely, I believe in many cases, upon other major world powers, particularly the French and the British as the former colonial powers, as intermediaries, interlocutors, to the rest of the world, in order to get them what they need from the World Bank, from USAID, from other aid organizations. The Nigerians just have a completely different attitude. There are over 100 million people. They have a lot of petroleum. They had a good, solid commercial basis, a very good intellectual foundation that the British left behind them. And they're going to swagger around the stage, at least the regional stage if not the world stage, and humility doesn't seem to be in their vocabulary.

And it's just a shame that so much of that energetic capability or dynamism is just directed into criminal behavior or scamming activities or scheming activities. There's not enough of a desire to invest, to create jobs, to work at a job, to get your reasonable return on capital investment. Typically too many Nigerians, I believe, chose to make their money from being middle men, being a trader or being a licensor where they don't have to worry about inventory, about labor, about utilities, about expenses, about warehouses, they just have to sign on the dotted line and then allow someone else to do the work and then they get a percentage of the deal. I don't know how this happened or why this happened, I'm not in a position to explain it but it seems to me that that seemed to have been the preferred route to wealth creation in Nigeria rather than building up industries.

No doubt it was a tough business environment. The whole licensing procedure, the labor requirements — the labor unions were very obstinate and annoying in Nigeria, almost mired in an anachronistic Third World neo-Marxist ideology where anything that the capitalists want to do was suspicious. There was a lot of Third World rhetoric. I think they were much affected by the Soviet attempts to infiltrate the trade union movement, so it was not a productive business relationship with organized labor. It was a hellish place to business. The oil companies did well. Of course, they were offshore, they were enclave economies. They just dug the wells, either offshore or onshore, laid the pipelines and

sucked that stuff out of the hole in the ground and put it offshore to tankers and they weren't really an integrated part of the economy. But even then you may have known in recent years, there have been a lot of labor disputes in the Delta of the Niger River where there are a lot of oil deposits. There is a very difficult relationship between the local population and the invested companies, whether it's British Petroleum, Exxon, or Mobil.

Apparently there has been very poor investment in the local villages and people thought they were being exploited. Because the government was not doing a good job of investing in the local infrastructure, helping to clean up spills, it fell upon the oil companies to build health clinics and pay for school teacher salaries. And, I mean, it's one thing to be a good neighbor to the people where you're working and taking out the wealth, but really, I see it as usurping the role of the government. I think entities like these, whether British Petroleum or others, should pay taxes, taxes should go to the government and it should be the government's responsibility to perform these municipal services or other government services. But then whenever these companies did pay taxes to the federal government there was a carefully worked out formula in which the federal government was supposed to delegate certain amounts of money to state and local governments, but one never knew whether these funds got through. The legislative process was if anything even murkier than our own by a long shot, so once money entered the treasury of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, lord knows what happened to it, what kind of bookkeeping there was. So it's a very difficult place to do business.

Q: Well, speaking about doing business, I mean, here you are a political officer looking at labor, human rights, was there, I mean, from your perspective, what was the political process like? A completely commercial operation or?

WEINTRAUB: Well, a political scientist who came to Nigeria and has written about it for a number of years, called the Nigerian process a kleptocracy. And almost everything was for sale if it wasn't nailed down and could be stolen. One heard stories all the time — even in the universities, the university administration would get a certain amount of money that

was supposed to be used to pay teachers' salaries, to equip the libraries, to equip the laboratories and somehow the funds would disappear before the money was spent in the intended fashion.

The business community is aware as possible of the environment, if they would think of making an investment, of what they were likely to get involved in. As far as the political process, elections were supposedly bought and sold, often through ballot box stuffing. There was an election when I was there in August of 1983 to elect a new government and as has happened in the past, there were widespread allegations of stuffing of the ballot boxes and other improprieties during the campaign. And finally, right on December 31, 1983, there was another military coup. So the elected civilian government lasted from roughly late '79 to late '83. And then there was a military coup. So it was a very interesting period, a challenging period. While the elected government was in power I spent a lot of time at the legislature seated in the gallery occasionally, talking to politicians, arranging for USIA (United States Information Agency) visitor programs of politicians, or some of their staffs. We were helping them to develop a capable and professional legislative reference section, something akin to the Library of Congress. The first thing the legislature did in Nigeria was vote themselves high salaries, vote themselves housing stipends, vote themselves automobiles and big offices, and they didn't really pay much attention to running the country. So we were trying to help them to create a professional legislative staff with the resources available to help the legislators. That worked for awhile until the military coup.

Q: I would think all of this would be very discouraging to try to work in something like that because, I mean, we come in with- we've got out own problems, every country does, but a relatively orderly process and all and one in which milking the system for all the money you can get personally is anathema to any system that sort of the western mind might hook up. And, you know, if you're looking at this, were you reporting on how the system wasn't working and what was the feeling? I mean, keep plugging away or what's the point?

WEINTRAUB: Well, you don't have to look at this as a personal mission to transform Nigeria into a replication of Switzerland or Finland with honest government. Obviously it's not going to happen. And you're not there as a secular missionary, if you will, to create and establish systems of good governance. I mean, I think some of us see it- in the best of all possible worlds - as what we might like to do. I think people deserve good governance but the Nigerians, like other people, get the system they deserve. One might say that Nigeria kept having these military takeovers of governments, kept having coups, in fact, because there was disgust with the government. And I remember in the early months of 1984, speaking to many Nigerians, many educated Nigerians, and they were not displeased, they were not displeased at all with a military takeover. They said they didn't think it would necessarily be a clean government, if you will, in our terms, but the perception was that at least the military was not endless in the avariciousness of its behavior. Yes, there would be a certain amount of corruption, but the military, as professional men, with officers in charge, knew their limits, they came from a career in the military so they particularly were not accustomed to overly lavish lifestyles individually. Sure there would be corruption for them and their families, but it would be within reason, it would be within a range that was acceptable to the Nigerian society. But under a civilian government, I mean, you had - it seemed like every month some other region wanted to create a new state, wanted to secede from an existing state.

When I was there (1982-1984), I think there were 19 states. A number of years later, when I was a desk officer for Nigeria (1990-1992), I think there were 37 states. And the main reason, I think, and many others did as well, for this creation of more and more states, was the additional sources of patronage. Every state had a governor and a whole staff that served the governor. Every state had a legislature and a whole staff and all these people needed their housing stipends. I mean, it just replicated on and on and on. So I think most people saw civilian government as endless, endless avarice, they didn't know where it would end. Whereas in the military government you believed it had its limits and if someone exceeded those limits as defined by the military they could be subject to

punishment. It wouldn't be a trial that would go on and on and on, and people would not be able to buy off the judge or influence the judge. If the military wanted to get you you'd be gotten. So most educated Nigerians were not very upset about this event, this military coup at the end of 1983.

Q: Well, what was sort of the feeling, your own feeling and say your fellow political reporters on the situation there? I mean, it sounds almost hopeless.

WEINTRAUB: Well, I'd say, for the most part — look, it's their country, they're going to run it the way they want to run it. And yes, we would have visitor programs under the former USIA and we'd bring some members of the legislature to the U.S., some legislative staff, perhaps, and they'd go around on visits and they'd see how a professional legislature is run and what it looks like and then they'd go back to Nigeria. Would it do any good? Who knows, for them to go back to the same system? We'd have speakers come out to Nigeria, USIA-sponsored speakers would come to talk about things like how to run a professional government agency. And the university students who would hear these speakers would always rail at the corruption within their own system. You know, these are the idealists, and they'd want to throw out the bums, throw out the corrupt ones but, you know, typically these students wanted to get a job, they wanted to get a cushy job, they wanted to get a government job, and once they did - they could very easily be corrupted by the system.

And, you know, as a diplomat you're representing the national interests of your government, of the U.S. government. In the international arena you look for Nigerian support at the United Nations and other arenas. But at the same time, when you wrote the human rights report, obviously you spoke to NGOs, you spoke to human rights activists and you also spoke to people in the office of the attorney general of the republic, you spoke to others in positions of responsibility. You said look, this is a mandate we have to write this Human Rights Report. Here's the UN declaration of human rights, which you subscribe to, here are these other documents which should be binding on your behavior and this is the reality as we see it; we have to write it and tell it like it is. But you do your

best to try to help the Nigerians help themselves as best we see fit, but you can't look at it as a personal mission to reform this society or else you're going to be knocking your head against the wall. And I don't think any ambassador would stand for that. And that's not the mission of the State Department.

Q: Well, on the human rights side, what was happening in Nigeria while you were there?

WEINTRAUB: Well, you know, the whole legal system was very inefficient; that would probably be the best way of putting it. A lot of the magistrates and judges were - at the highest level, at the supreme court, you had judges who were trained at Oxford and Cambridge, were members of the British Bar for a time before they came back to Nigeria, they were very respected. There were a few Nigerians who served as judges on the World Court at the Hague, at the highest level - you know, top notch people. But once you scratch the surface and went down to lower levels, things were very disjointed and you saw a very different picture. There were different levels of training for magistrates and judges, no record keeping, no supplies at offices. And then there was always, in certain areas of the country, the question of: “Do we apply Nigerian civil law or ethnic law, or local law?” Or should Islamic Sharia Law be applied in northern Nigeria?

As far as the prisons went, the administration of prisons, there was a very indifferent attitude, with little or no training for prison guards, not much expenditure in the way of prisons for rehabilitation. In another area, there were very strong laws on the books about insulting the head of state, or insulting major figures. As a result, one had to be aware of limitations, freedom of speech was not quite the same as we're accustomed to. But there was a pretty good press, a lively and generally free press. They had to be careful about overstepping the bounds, but within reason they could report on a good number of things. It was for the most part what we would call a yellow press; not overly responsible. A lot of accusations would appear in pretty drastic terms, in lurid headlines, and they were not always followed by any facts. But there were a lot of papers - kind of the like the “penny press” as they started out in the UK maybe a century or more earlier. But it was very

interesting and quite disorderly. You never knew what would be happening from one day to the next.

Q: Well, did- in a way was there a political process- talking about the time before the military took over again- was there a political process that you could follow or did much come out of the legislature?

WEINTRAUB: The legislature was - they had to ratify certain documents, they had to pass a budget, they had to obviously pass laws. The effective bureaucracy to implement the laws, however, was generally indifferent, so laws about pensions, social security, laws about regulating economic activities, regulatory powers were only weakly enforced. For example, as written in the human rights reports which I prepared, there were certain rights on the books about the rights of labor to organize, but the labor unions in fact had little power. There was almost a complete absence of inspection of safety standards at factories or at petroleum fields. So the nature of the government as a regulatory authority was very weak. So there was a functioning government, there was a police force, but as far as government as a licensor of activities, it was either indifferent or subject to manipulation. Schools existed but there were stories one heard all the time that students in high school and colleges had to pay off their professors in order to get a passing grade.

I mean, it was a dysfunctional society in many, many ways. There were elected governors of the states, there were elected legislatures of the states and of course of the national government. There was a foreign ministry that we interacted with. In the case of the foreign ministry, when they replied to a demarche on a UN issue in Geneva and said, “Oh yes, that's a very important issue, we'll send a note to our ambassador in Geneva to act on that,” you never knew if the message would be sent or not. And then you'd get a response from our mission in Geneva and they'd say, you know, we spoke to the Nigerian ambassador several days later, he said he hadn't heard anything on this. So you never knew if anything happened as people said it would happen.

Q: Well, how did the - both the religious division, the north Muslim and the south being Christian and Animist, I guess, and then the tribal thing, one thinks of the civil war and the Biafran thing. How did that play out while you were there?

WEINTRAUB: Well, it was always a bit of an undercurrent. I think after the Biafran war of the late '60s, I think Nigeria did get over that, similar to the effect of the Civil War in the United States. We said well, we'll have our rivalries, we'll have our regional rivalries and competitiveness, but let's not live through that again. I think there was a general feeling that that was not going to happen again. But the religious differences were still pretty strong, as I mentioned, with the influences of Sharia Law in the north, for example. And it still happens to this day with reports of women subject to being stoned for adultery. So it's the Muslim north, as you said, against the mainly Christian and Animist south.

Then there is the tribal rivalry between the Ibos and the Yorubas and the Hausas. At a certain level, one must admit, there was a fair amount of intermarriage - particularly among the Yoruba in the west, there was a lot of mixed marriages of Muslim and Christian. Apparently the Muslim behavior was affected by a Christian spouse, so the types of religious behavior in the north are more austere, if you will, the type of Islam was different than in the west, but there was always rivalry. And when the elections took place, the national elections in 1983, I think it was August '83, there was endless debate about the need to balance the ticket, if you will, between a northerner and a southerner. Typically it always had to have a northerner. I mean, the three old regions of Nigeria were the north, the east and the west, the north being the homeland of the Hausa, the east being the home of the Ibo, and the west being the home of the Yoruba. And you could never balance the ticket simply with east-west candidates. Of course, the north was much too large to be ignored, and a lot of the military officer corps was from the north as well. So ethnic politics, tribal politics, regional politics was always a part of the mixture, there's no doubt about that.

Q: I realize you weren't in an economic officer, but sort of what were we telling people, Americans that came to invest there?

WEINTRAUB: Well, as best we could, we had to tell it like it is. They were aware of this. I can follow this up a bit later when I was desk officer several assignments later with all the scams that started taking place. This was a little before that, but we had to tell the American investors - typically there were not that many uninitiated potential investors coming in; the environment was much too tough. It was mainly the oil companies, banks, insurance companies. And these people did their risk analysis and they knew the environment fairly well. Most had been there for a number of years. They probably had better inside information about the business environment than we did at the embassy; they had to deal with it on a daily basis. You didn't get, for example, a small investor from the Midwest United States who heard about a business opportunity; that was kind of rare. So we were dealing with the big guys mainly.

Q: Where did the money go? Was it, you know, with this corruption? Was it all heading to Switzerland or?

WEINTRAUB: A lot of the stories that emerged after the coup New Years Eve 1983, into '84, were rife with allegations of where the money went. Supposedly a lot of it was traced to both London and Switzerland, perhaps some to the United States, I'm not sure. And I think over the years since then, some of it has been repatriated back to the government of Nigeria. There are endless legal battles between the former dictators, former politicians, the families of the politicians, endless legal wrangling of one kind or another, but apparently most of it did go abroad.

Q: You were there, the coup happened the turn of the year basically '84, you left in '84, but for about what, about the six months you were there, what did you see happening? I mean, did the military make a difference?

WEINTRAUB: Well, obviously there was no more legislature for me to follow since this kind of political activity was suspended. I focused more on human rights, speaking more and more with activists, speaking with the former politicians who had not been arrested. Some of them, some of the politicians I knew had been imprisoned for a few weeks, and obviously the embassy wanted to get firsthand responses from these people, concerning what they were subject to in prison and how they were treated. So since I knew a lot of the politicians I was able to meet with them when they were released and have a chat with them. Nigerians love to talk. They are generally very friendly and outgoing. So there aren't a great many secrets in Nigeria. That's one thing; it's conspiratorial, but things do come out. People there - Nigerians just are very friendly and like to talk to people.

So I followed human rights, civil society, NGOs, making do under what things were like at that time. We had a visit there of Vice President George Bush. I don't remember whether this was before or after, it was probably before the coup; I doubt whether he would have come under military government, it was probably before the coup. There was the Bar Association of Nigeria; that was one of my major contacts into civic society, the Bar Association of Nigeria. They had a human rights committee and I got to know members of the human rights committee. And we had meetings with theand I arranged a meeting with them for Elliot Abrams, who was then State's Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, during the visit of Vice President Bush.

So it was interacting mainly with what we call now civic society and what the politicians were trying to save and nurture, if you will, the remnants of civic society. They were looking forward for the day, sometime in the future, which came many years later, when they could again have an elected government. So it was mainly maintaining contact with non-government organizations, with the labor unions, with the Bar Association, with the church, with the business community, those organizations. Obviously there were no political parties, no political organizations, but there were these organizations that were allowed to function within the society. They may even have been the beginnings of

an environmental organization concerned about oil spills. So, I mean, these were little grouplets, if you will, you wanted to nurture them in their own kind of self-government, and hope that when the time came and people could organize as a political organization, these people would have certain kind of skills that they could use in that arena.

Q: How heavy, during the time you were there, was the hand of the military?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, it was quite heavy during the military rule, but even during the election of the government. Apparently, as I believe is also the case in a number of South American societies as well, the military, as an institution, owns some of the armaments, depots, and armaments-manufacturing facilities, so they generate some of their own income. They own hostels and hotels as well, so the military had certain income-producing investments. In Nigeria, with its history of coups, even during the period of elected government from '79 to '83, there was always concern and anxiety about “the boys in khaki,” as they used to call them, and obviously that concern was warranted because they did take over again in late '83. So the influence of the military was never far from anyone's mind.

Q: Did the embassy go into a sort of a- I mean, did we, when the military take over did we go into an almost non-recognition or limited recognition mode or did we do anything?

WEINTRAUB: I have to think back to that period. I think we did go through a period like that, maybe for a short period of time until we saw what kind of stability there was. I remember during the period of the coup, the immediate period of martial law, you know, there was a certain amount, a period of time without — we didn't know who was in charge. The military was not upfront about announcing members of the council, the military council. But I don't think that period lasted very long. There was a fairly rapid acceptance by the population. There was no underground resistance and most European countries were — well, here we go again, the Nigerians are at it again. And as I recall, within a short

period of time, we — I don't think we ever really technically suspended our relations or recalled the ambassador. So things just continued on for the most part.

Q: Were there any other- well, what was social life like? I mean, not just under the military but in Nigeria? You're saying these were a friendly people, how did you find-?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I loved socializing with Nigerians and I think- I always used to say I had the best job in the embassy. Other people in the embassy who interacted mainly with the bureaucrats, whether in the foreign ministry or with any other ministry of government, for the most part they were talking as professional to professional, particularly in the foreign ministry, you know, diplomat to diplomat. Whereas in the legislature, you know, you're dealing with elected politicians. Like politicians anywhere, they're all over the map; some are friendly, some are not but they're not bound by dictates, by the policy that the minister set down. Every politician, every elected politician is responsive to his or her own constituency, so if he wants to shoot off his or her mouth he can do it. So I enjoyed speaking to these people; I had a number of great discussions and conversations with them.

They all had voted themselves official flats in Nigeria or apartments. There was a block of apartments not too far from the legislature where they all lived. So whenever I had an appointment, I generally had to visit a member at his apartment, because as best I can recall they did not each have offices in the legislature. There was an office for the speaker of the house, and president of the senate; but again, this was a fairly rudimentary parliament, without much history behind it. This was 1982, and the country had only returned to an elected government in 1979, after about 13 years of military government. Most of the members operated out of their government-furnished offices-apartments, so they set up an office in their apartment. And one could go to visit a politician in his or her apartment, have a chat, and then walk down the halls and see who else was available. In that way it was like a dorm, it was like a college dorm, and all the MPs lived together in this huge, 15 story apartment building. You never knew who you were going to run

into, they all lived there. And it was kind of a collegial atmosphere. I also entertained fairly frequently. People in the legislature were easier to invite than senior government officials, so we invited a varied group of elected legislators. I often got the head of the political section to come to some of those, I got the deputy chief of mission to come, occasionally the ambassador might drop by depending on who I'd put together.

And of course with your guests being Nigerianand this was typical with other people in the embassy as welyou never knew if they were or were not going to show up. Would they show up on time or would they show up several hours later? If married, would they show up with one wife or would they show up with several wives or no wives? One never knew, and one had to be flexible when setting the table. One never knew what one was going to end up with. And, you know, this was acceptable in their society and this was not something one needed to stand on principle about - that's the way it is and you just live with it. And so, we had a lot of very enjoyable evenings, a lot of informal discussions.

In fact, I got into a little bit of trouble with the government at one time, due to the nature of my interaction with members of the legislature. I don't recall what specifically may have generated it, but one day the embassy received a diplomatic note from the foreign ministry complaining that I was making appointments with members of the legislature directly, rather than going through the foreign ministry. It seemed apparent that legislators knew nothing of any such requirement, and the foreign ministry did not, as a rule, emphasize this as something that was a rigid rule. I don't know if the embassy ever formally responded to the note, but I think I may have had some discussion with the ambassador about ihe wanted to know if there was some particularly egregious behavior of mine of which he should be aware. I assured him I could think of no such incidents, and that was the end of the matter. But I did make sure to make a personal copy of that diplomatic note for my own records.

I don't think we developed great friendships, though, because the worlds were just very different. Typically the spouses, if the principal I was relating to was a male, as it was in

most cases - often the spouses were much less educated, very often they might not speak any English, maybe they went only to a year or two of grade school. So other than this official entertainment it was hard to socialize on any extended basis. And there was not much to do in Lagos in the way of movies, in the way of artistic endeavors, in the way of cultural activities — such as museums, theatre, cinema, restaurants; it was all very limited. So there was a fair amount of expatriate socializing.

I served on the school board. My wife served on the American Embassy Recreation Association, which worked on the commissary and related activities. So we socialized with a lot of peoplnot as much from the American embassy, because you'd see those folks at work, but people from the other embassy communities. On the school board I would meet people from other ex-pat communities and other embassies. And there was a British embassy-sponsored theatrical grougroups such as these seemed to flourish all over the world. And they always put on these kind of amateur plays and it was kind of fun, they did a very good job. You could close your eyes, listen to the play, and be almost anywhere in the world. One of the European embassies, I want to say Austrian, they had a fellow who could sing excerpts from operas, and they would hold little soirees, if you will, with a piano accompanist. So there was a fair amount of socializing among the ex-pats but we did have something uniquely Nigerian, I remember, we did attend at our deputy chief of mission's home, a kind of “at home” society evening. Once a month at the deputy chief of mission's house we would invite a prominent Nigerian to be a speaker and we'd invite U.S. embassy people and people from other embassies as well and other prominent Nigerians. And one time it might be a discussion on the Nigerian economy or it might be on the traditional societies, on something else. We were trying to have a society, if you will, for a higher level of discussion. So I think that individually, and the embassy as a whole - we each tried very much to mix and pull in as much as possible, host society and Nigerian society with ourselves and with other ex-pats. It was something we had to work at.

Q: How did external things- our South African policy, did that play much of a- was that much of an issue or-?

WEINTRAUB: Oh yes, particularly within the foreign ministry. I would comment that the foreign ministry, like many faculty at the universities and other intellectuals, seemed to be mired in kind of a time warp with a lot of old rhetoric, a lot of tired rhetoric about neo-colonialism by American investors, British investors, the World Bank, the IMF (International Monetary Fund). The line would be that they're really just instruments of global capitalism and domination, and that we were in bed with South Africa. Let me add there was a certain amount of truth about our support for the South African government, but a lot of it was kind of stale, rehashed old rhetoric on ongoing issues, like the Arab-Israeli dispute, on South Africa, and other international areas. We were often a lot better at the ambassadorial level with the head of state, but for the most part a lot of the routine contacts I had with the foreign ministry simply produced a lot of the old, stale rhetoric of the '70s, which was kind of discouraging. But then again, the local universities that educated these people didn't have the hard currency to purchase all the newer periodicals and books, so I don't know what these people relied on. And there were typically a lot of editorials, a lot of articles in the newspaper and the media by Nigerian intellectuals. Again, these often produced a lot of stale, rehashed discussions about the Cold War and Nigeria's place in Africa, with often a very inflated sense of Nigeria's place in Africa and the world and what kind of deference and respect should be owed to Nigeria.

Q: Was there any group that spent particular time in the Soviet Union?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I think a certain number of Nigerians, particularly in the labor movement, had gone to Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow. I think the more current intellectuals, the more dynamic intellectuals, had been educated in the West, mainly in the UK and increasingly in the U.S. The first generation of Nigerian intellectuals were, of course, those who went abroad in the 1930s, '40s and '50s, almost all of whom were educated in the UK. In the '60s and '70s more had gone to the United States. But certain

elements had gone to Moscow and other East Bloc universities on scholarships and they were still- they were in their prime. They had gone as youngsters, maybe, in the '60s and '70s and now this was the '80s and they were in their prime, and there was a lot of that type of stale Cold War rhetoric there that we had to contend with. For the most part, most of the population was pretty Western oriented. The Nigerians were so entrepreneurial, as we said earlienot always in an honest sense of the word, but so entrepreneurially active. The idea of a socialist type of a worker's paradise didn't seem to be in the cards for them; they all wanted their own action.

Q: Well Leon, you left in '84.

WEINTRAUB: We left there in summer of '84. Let me see if there were other interesting - At one point we had an interesting visit of Vice President George Bush. He brought, at the time, Elliot Abrams, who was our assistant secretary for human rights, and I remember I organized a human rights forum, a discussion. Abrams needed something to occupy his time. So we had a luncheon and a forum that the Bar Association of Nigeria organized, a discussion of the human rights situation in Nigeria. I think Mr. Abrams enjoyed that while the vice president had his other visits.

I remember at one point I was a control officer for the visit of the vice president to the legislature. Obviously this was while there was a legislature. It must have been in early '83. So I remember, I'm the control officer at the parliament, waiting for the vice president and his motorcade to come and I look around and I see on one of the flag poles that the Nigerians had raised the U.S. flag upside down. So, it's one of those things where you've got five minutes or less to do somethinthe horror of every control officer. So anyway, we had to do something - it was a nice story, we did manage to get the flag righted in time. But that was kind of high point to have a vice president of the United States come to Nigeria. We had a visit of one of the astronauts, who also came to Nigeria.

So I had a great time. And people always ask me, well, how was it? Was it difficult? My reply: The physical stuff you get used to. You know, whether it's electricity, water, the heat. You can adjust. You've got air conditioning. All of our homes had a generator. The public joke was that the generator was the regular supply and the utility was the backup. Of course, it seems most of the time you're on generator. Even the Nigerians had a joke about this situation. The national power company was known by its initials, N-E-P-A, for Nigerian Electric Power Authority. But most Nigerians joked that N-E-P-A really stood for “No Electric Power At all.”

Obviously we all had to depend very heavily on the embassy's general services officer. It was - housing was supplied to you by the embassy, furnished housing, so you only brought your dishes and clothing and pots and pans and pictures. So, obviously there was a very important role for the admin section, the general services officer. But I think the morale at the embassy was exceptionally high. I think Ambassador Pickering did a great job. He had a nice large grounds, and a nice home with a swimming pool. The swimming pool was open quite regularly for the embassy staff. On the weekends it was open and on most days of the week it was open for us as well. And most weekends during the day most embassy families with little children, as we were, spent much of each weekend at the pool. We had three children by this time - our youngest was born in Israel, taken to Nigeria as a six month old, and by the way was not sick a day of her life in Nigeria. We followed the prescribed regimen, of course, of the anti-malarial pills, the yellow fever shots, and everything else. So, to get back to our activities, most of our weekends were at the swimming pool with other families with young children, where it was always hot and humid; it was always weather for the swimming pool.

We did a certain amount of traveling in Nigeria. I remember one trip we took, a politician I had become friendly with had suggested we visit him, his home area in eastern Nigeria, he was an Ibo politician. So I remember it was over the Christmas break from school, we took a ride - are you interested in these stories?

Q: Yes.

WEINTRAUB: So we took a ride to his Ibo area and I remember, our kids were maybe one and four and seven. So we wanted to prepare the kids. Now, we told them, we're going to the interior of Nigeria. And you know, the streets aren't all going to be paved and there might not be electric everywhere. You have to respect the people - you know, try to get the kids culturally sensitive to what the situation was going to be. Well, the first major event we had to go through was on the highway - a big bridge over the Niger River separating eastern from western Nigeria; it's a major highway crossing. Well, we're in the car and it's hot. We probably had air conditioning but maybe it wasn't working well. And we're in a traffic jam in a major busy city. Well, after this long traffic jam, finally we're just about across the bridge, we're through that bottleneck, we're ready to continue on and a policeman stops me. It was apparent he wanted some payment, a bribe to go across. My diplomatic license plates didn't mean a thing to him, several hours out of Lagos, and neither did my diplomatic i.d. card, but I wasn't going to pay. And it's hot and my wife and the three kids in there, but I was determined to sit it out. So eventually we got through that.

And then we finally arrive at my friend's village and we see his house. The best I can describe it is a miniature White House. He had gotten wealthy off the system some way or another and built in his home town. And what you do in that culture is you show the whole home town you're a big man. And the way you do it is you build a huge house. And there were flood lights around iwe arrived at nighand it was furnished with opulent furniture, marble floors, tile bathrooms, the works. The bathrooms were tiled, but of course there was no running water yet. That would come later, hopefully. So we had to flush the toilets with a bucket of water you got from a pump. Everything was very mixed with the primitive and the new; the fixtures were very elaborate, but I feel certain the house was run by its own generator. And I remember these people had older children who were going to school in the United States and actually were now home to spend the Christmas holiday with their parents. So after prepping the children for who knows what to expect, we're in this

opulent home and for breakfast we get pancakes with maple syrup. So, it was just a whole mix of the old and the new, the underprivileged, the overprivileged, the poverty, and the opulence. I mean, this is the Third World and Nigeria has it all in spades - because there's a lot of money coursing through the economy from all that petroleum; there's just a lot, a lot, a lot of wealth.

So, you know, we spent a day or two in this Ibo village and our friend took us around and showed us around, and it was a mix of people not much above the poverty level, and our host, who probably had the most luxurious residence in the village. And the interesting thing was that I don't think he was faced with much resentment or jealousy. I am confident thagiven the norms of that culturhe was sure to spread a certain share of his wealth around the village, helping people in one way or another, and in that way he could be seen as a benefactor of his village, using his share of Nigeria's riches for the benefit of his home town.

And I'm sure our kids don't remember it but, you know, we did our best to really get around. I did some internal traveling, official traveling into Nigeria, into the north, into the west, into the east as well, without my family. But this was the major trip I made with my family. It's tough; you don't know whether there's going to be a gas station on the road. You don't know where you're going to find a toilet on the road. You don't know where you're going to find a restaurant on the road. You don't know if you're going to find a road, with some of the roads in the rainy season, the roads could be washed out. Bridges could be washed out. You know, God forbid you get a flat tire, break down. I mean, it is not easy. So, it's my recollection that most embassy people did not do much traveling in Nigeria, they stayed in Lagos most of the time.

But as a former Peace Corps volunteer, who had done other things in Africa, I had to prove to myself, I was going to get out of Lagos. And I think it was important for my wife, also, although she had been around Sierra Leone with me earlier. So when people ask about Nigeria, we can reply that - yes, physically it's tough, it's demanding, but if you enjoy

the culture, if you enjoy meeting the people, you can have a wonderful time; as I said, Nigerians were very friendly people. But arrogant? I guess in thinking their country was the best on earth they were not too different from most people around the world. But they are generally very friendly and very nice to be with. A lot of storytellers, that's for sure.

Q: Well then, '84 whither?

WEINTRAUB: Well, in 1984, I forget what the bidding process was and where we wanted to go, but we ended up being assigned to Ecuador, to Quito, Ecuador. I may have bid on, actually I believe at one point I wanted to extend for a year in Nigeria, but I think I put that request in a bit late and they already had assigned someone. But I would have stayed. I was in my element; I really enjoyed it. I don't know if I bid on some other African countries or not, but anyway I figured I would build on the Latin American expertise I had after serving two years in Colombia. So after home leave, after exploiting the opportunity to visit Disneyland, after home leave in the Washington area and training, a bit of a refresher in Spanish (end side two, tape four)

Q: This is tape five, side one with Leon Weintraub. Yes.

WEINTRAUB: So we're on home leave in the summer of 1984. We took the family in a rented station wagon, made the American journey down the east coast down I-95, and spent a few days in Orlando at Disney World. Of course our youngest, who was not quite three, doesn't remember it, but the older kids, they enjoyed it. We flew out of Miami into Quito and began the next stage. I was, by this time, a full-fledged political officer; I was a political officer for my whole assignment in Nigeria and a political officer in Ecuador as well. Here my assignment was different. I was concentrating mostly on external relations, so my area was Ecuador and Latin America, and the foreign policy of Ecuador.

And I functioned as a political-military affairs officer as well. We had a military assistance program in Ecuador, so I did the pol-mil job, ensuring that our military assistance program meshed with our overall political agenda. As a result, I didn't get much into the internal

politics of the country, as I did in Nigeria, covering the legislature, or writing on human rights. I did a little bit of it, I did write one State Department human rights report, and I also took the lead in starting in Ecuador the State Department's Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program at this point. We did some training of local security forces against hijacking, hostage-taking, and other forms of terrorism, so I got into a little bit of that part of domestic issues as well.

Q: You did this from '84 to when?

WEINTRAUB: To '86. It was another two-year assignment. We had a series of relatively short tours - in Colombia, Israel, Nigeria and Ecuador, all two-year assignments. We were moving around a lot in that time.

Q: Who was ambassador?

WEINTRAUB: The ambassador when we got there was Ambassador Sam Hart. And at some point, maybe about midway through my tour, he was replaced by Ambassador Fernando Rondon, or Fred Rondon at the time.

Q: What- how stood American-Ecuadorian relations during the period you were there?

WEINTRAUB: They were fairly good. Ecuadorian petroleum was starting to come on-line. Of course, there were serious problems with drugs, mainly spillover from Colombia. We had mainly the marijuana from Colombia and other drugs from Bolivia or Peru. We had a guerrilla movement in Colombia, which was also spilling over into Ecuador, so it was a country that welcomed some of our security assistance. There were starting to be some hostage incidents, some incidents of terrorism against the pipeline. There was a leftist movement in Ecuador, obviously much smaller than in Colombia, but there was a leftist underground movement. Some of it was allied with or used the rhetoric of saving the indigenous peoples from the destruction of their environment by the petroleum exploitation within the country.

You had mentioned a few tapes ago the Lebanese influence in South America. There was a large Lebanese influence in South America. There was a large Lebanese community, mainly in Guayaquil, in the port on the Pacific Ocean, so you didn't feel it much in Quito, or see it much in Quito, but it was very strong in the commercial life of the country. In fact, Guayaquil was considered to be the commercial hub of the country. We had a consulate in Guayaquil, quite a large consulate, and there was a large Lebanese business community. One of the mayors of Guayaquil, Abdala Bucaram, at some point in the '90s became president of Ecuador, but that was at a strange period. At one brief period - I remember I was in Switzerland at the time reading about it in a newspaper - there were three presidents simultaneously. One was an elected president, who was apparently deposed by the legislature, but I think he refused to step down; one political faction then put in their own candidate for president. And another president was an interim office-holder of some kind. I'm not sure I have all the facts straight, but it was a confusing period. So yes, there was a pretty significant Lebanese or other Arab community in Ecuador and I think that was something we wanted to be aware about, concerning how the government might vote in the UN or what it might do on the Arab-Israeli issue.

Q: In your work, did you get involved in the Peruvian-Ecuadorian border problem?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, it's hard to avoid that. And it's always a debate. I mean, if you look at the maps of South America, there's always an issue of where the border is between Ecuador and Peru. And often the boundaries on the Ecuadorian maps, the boundaries will not quite be the same as on a Peruvian map. There are occasionally skirmishes on the border, but I think Ecuador is aware it would obviously suffer the worst in any major battle; as a military power they're not a match for the Peruvians. So on some of the maps, the Ecuadorian maps typically show a lot of that area as disputed area, with a definitive boundary yet to be maintained. That's not the view of the Peruvians.

Now, we were part, the U.S. was part of a body-

Q: The U.S. and somebody else.

WEINTRAUB: Argentina perhaps, I'm not sure.

Q: This goes back to the 1940s.

WEINTRAUB: Exactly, exactly. So we were part of an international commission that set that border. So, I mean, it was hard to stay out of it completely, but obviously until it was raised to the diplomatic level and we had to do something, we preferred to stay out of it. Of course, you know, if the American ambassador in Quito says the wrong thing, or it is interpreted the wrong way, the foreign ministry in Peru is going to hear about that the next day or the same day. And, we could be in some diplomatic hot water, and vice versa if the U.S. ambassador in Peru says something on that subject. So we had to be very careful about what we said about that. But that was always an issue.

Q: Well, how did you find dealing with the foreign ministry in Quito?

WEINTRAUB: Well, it was quite professional. I remember I had a lot of dealings with the equivalent of their deputy or assistant foreign minister for international organizations. I can't remember his name now, but we had very good relations. I'd probably see or speak to him at least once or twice a week; there were always issues in the UN or any other international organization. I remember that he spoke a good Spanish; he probably spoke slower than customary so I could understand it. I suspect his English was probably pretty good, but most of our work was done in Spanish. He was my major contact in the foreign ministry, although frequently it would be the officer in charge of North American relations for the U.S. and Canada. The foreign ministry was relatively small, but it was run in a professional way. By this I mean you could be reasonably certain that if they said, “Oh, that's a good point, I'll instruct my ambassador in New York to take this stand,” you could be fairly certain that in fact that would get done. So it was quite friendly and amicable.

Again, I had some responsibility for human rights, so I had contact with human rights again in the bar association, in civic society. We did a fair amount of entertaining within the allotted budget allowance; I always enjoyed doing that to meet people kind of out of their office in a home environment. By this time my Spanish was getting better so it was easier to live in that society. And I'd say we had a good time. We worked with people in the U.S. military, in the security assistance office, to make sure that the military program and our political agenda were working well together. At this time we had issues with the contras in Nicaragua, and you always had to be aware there's an innate suspicion of Uncle Sam in South America. No matter what the U.S. did, there was a lingering suspicion of the “Gringos” and what they wanted to do. This held for whatever we did in Panama, in Central America and of course, we had serious problems concerning the contras in Nicaragua. This had echoes and reverberations throughout Ecuador, and even for people who tended to be friendly with the United States, this was an ingrained attitude that everybody grew up with in school: watch out for Uncle Sam, you never know where he's going to show up and when. So that was kind of a backdrop to almost everything you did.

Q: Well, how about, we were, during this period we were quite aggressive about our dislike of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. Did you find yourself having to deal with that in your dealings with the foreign ministry both particularly in the UN and in the OAS?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I remember, it was obviously a difficult issue and one that demanded a lot of attention. I remember the legislators were a bit on the prickly side. I remember at one point I got into some kind of mischief or trouble; I was talking to - I wanted to meet the head or the chairman of their equivalent of the Senate foreign relations committee to talk about some issue and I said something, we discussed something which I had thought was fairly innocuous, I can't remember at the time what it was. But after our meeting he had an interview with the press and he alleged that I said something, he put a spin on whatever I said in some way to allege that I was interfering with the sovereignty of Ecuador. And that was really an eye opener. Everyone gets a zinger like that in his career; you kind of

learn to be a bit more tentative or cautious about what you say. This was not a foreign ministry official where, for the most part, things will stay in channels. This was an elected official, an elected legislator who could say pretty much anything he damned well pleases. So it was not a big-time serious issue, I didn't get recalled or anything, but it was a little uncomfortable for a couple of days.

Maybe I'll just tell one more story before we close for the day. We went through a crisis exercise, a scenario at one point in Ecuador. The visiting “crisis exercise” team came down from Washington and we went through a scenario where virtually everyone at the embassy was shutdown in the embassy to do a role playing scenario. They do this thing in various ways, such as you're in one room and other people running the exercise are in another room. And I was in the crisis room in the embassy; I was manning a phone and the scenario was that there were riots in the streets of some kind and I had the good fortune, or misfortune, to handle a phone call from a businessman who was in Panama. In the scenario, he was on the way to Ecuador and he was going to clinch a big business deal, and he wanted to talk to the embassy to find out what the hell was going on; there was all this stuff in the media about riots in the streets and he wanted to know was it safe to come or not. You know, this was the scenario, the guy on the phone with me was role playing, he was a businessman. And this was one of the role players from Washington. So he pushed me and he pushed me about what's going on in the streets, and eventually I said something to the effect that, yes, the streets aren't safe or something like that and obviously he pushed it in order to get what he wanted.

Well, in the scenario the next thing was that this American businessman in Panama happened to be interviewed by the BBC or whatever and he says, “Yeah, the American Embassy told me, you know, the streets aren't safe in Ecuador.” Of course, the foreign ministry reacted in a furor and they sent a tough note to the embassy, asking why we were misleading people — there were just three blocks of Quito that were having a small disturbance and here we were sending out rumors about the safety of their country. Obviously this was part of the job of the exercise to do this. So again, I think it worked well.

I learned, you know, not to generalize, be precise about what you say. On the one hand you do have a mission and a mandate to alert American citizens about what's going on, but you have to be specific about what you're saying, make sure you know what you're talking about, make sure it's accurate and make sure that people don't read into your words anything that you don't want to be misunderstood. So I learned a few lessons there.

Q: Well, one last question on this. What about in the human rights field, what about the indigenous population? Basically the Indian population because I understand they're rather distinct from sort of the ruling class of Hispanic origin. How did we view that at the time?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I would have to look at the 1984 human rights report on Ecuador or 1983 report. I believe we — I'm sure we covered it. We probably didn't, at that point, pay as much distinct attention to the rights of indigenous people versus the rights of everyone else to the degree that we would cover it nowadays. I mean, we wrote about law enforcement. I don't know if you know, but the human rights report, it seems that every year it's expanded into another area. In the very early years it didn't have a lot about labor, but in later years it did. In the early years I'm not sure it had a lot about indigenous people; in later years it did. So I don't think there was a special section about the rights of indigenous people at that time.

Q: Well this later became an issue, didn't it? I mean-

WEINTRAUB: Oh yes. It is right now in Bolivia and Peru and Ecuador.

Q: And also in Ecuador, if I recall, I just vaguely recall something about more demonstrations, you know, I mean-

WEINTRAUB: Yes, I think that was in the '90s, for the most part. Most of the political action was by the leftist, self-styled leftists, by the youth. Universities, as you know, Latin American universities are just a hotbed for youthful rebellion. Some may have been fomented by the communists. Who knows? But typically with the tradition of the

autonomous universities, typically with the police not entering the university grounds, there were endless, endless incidents of demonstrations, streets being blockaded, typically the burning of tires in the streets. This was a tradition that, you know, pretty much happened several times a year. That was the major type of demonstration. I think it was just the beginnings of the self-awareness movement on the part of the indigenous population.

Q: Was there anything else I should cover you think?

WEINTRAUB: No, I'd say I had kind of a routine kind of tour. I remember at the end of the tour the political officer who was the head of the section had to leave early for his reassignment. So, for maybe a month I became acting head of the political section. That was kind of nice for me. I could see the process of transition from one ambassador to another ambassador, all the preparation, all that has to be accomplished; the acceptance by the host government of a new ambassador, all the protocol and procedures that went into that. But I enjoyed it and again, I enjoyed the Andean society. Quito was like a smaller version of Bogot#. Not quite as wealthy, not quite as classy, if you will, but I definitely enjoyed the Andean society. We took a few trips around the country, actually, with my family. We drove down, all the way down to southern parts of Ecuador, made trips around the country. Went to the monument at the equator, went driving in the mountains with some other people. We also had a wonderful trip to the Galapagos Islands and another trip to Machu Picchu in Peru. So it was a nice tour.

At one point, we were planning to take a drive to Colombia, to visit some of the Colombian friends we had made during our assignment there in the late 1970's. Unfortunately, a couple of weeks before we were to travel, there was an incident concerning the so-called “drug lords” and the United Stateit may have been the passage in Colombia of a revised extradition law. The drug lords made a threat that if any extradition process were to begin there would be American blood on the streets, or something to that effect. The U.S. Embassy in Bogota quickly sent out a “Travel Advisory” strongly urging American tourists

and all non-official visitors to review and possibly reschedule or cancel their travel plans. We cancelled our travel plans and that was that.

Q: Well in 1986, we'll put at the end here, whither?

WEINTRAUB: Whither in '86? It was back to Washington. At this point we'd been out of the country for quite some time. In 1988 our son, our oldest son, would be 13 years old and it would be time for a bar mitzvah ceremony, so this was something that was on our mind. So we thought it would be appropriate to be in the United States for this, so our families could share in the experience. So it was back to Washington and my assignment in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research as the INR analyst for Israel.

Q: Alright, we'll pick it up then.

Today is the 31st of August, 2005. Leon, 1986, you're at INR as analyst for Israel. Is that right?

WEINTRAUB: That's correct.

Q: And you're doing that from '86 to when?

WEINTRAUB: It was a two-year Washington assignment, '86 to '88.

Q: Okay. I would imagine that this would be an interesting but difficult assignment because you're probably swamped in intelligence from the Israelis and from ourselves and all. Anyway, I mean, how did you find, sort of the intelligence side of dealing with Israel?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I think I certainly gained a great deal of respect for the intelligence function and the importance of the intelligence function as an aid to the policymakers in the department. I had expected it to be a bit more- let me try to describe it - maybe I expected it to be a bit more academic, a bit more leisurely than it turned out to be. The word research in there, in INR, that kind of implied for me “research,” what I knew coming

from an academic background. This was, you know, you take time to do some research and then you put out a product.

In fact, like much of the other bureaus in the department, we were driven by a daily agenda that I discovered once I was there - this was the secretary's “briefing book,” if you will, and every day we were potentially liable, depending on, of course, what information was available in the intelligence stream, we were potentially liable to have one of the items for the secretary's briefing book. These were the so-called “front of the book” items, the shorter items that may be only be two paragraphs long, but just picked up on some intelligence, and this is what it may mean relative to this particular issue. And then perhaps once a week, maybe for a country like Israel, you might be expected to do what was called at that time an item for the “back of the book.” This would be a longer piece, maybe a page-and-a-half to two pages maximum, a more in-depth piece trying to pull together either some items that had been reported about separately in the past or a new area that was worth that much of the secretary's reading time for him or her to be briefed on.

So it was not the leisurely, feet-up-on-the-desk thinking about things that I had obviously erroneously thought it might be. There were deadlines and you were driven to meet them just as you would be in a regional bureau, for example. But, obviously, we were supposed to think about not so much the immediate policy-driven agenda but, instead, what else was out there that could affect the policy. Obviously I enjoyed the interaction with the regional bureau. This was an assignment that was involved, of course, with the Israel affairs desk. The ambassador in Israel at the time was Tom Pickering, who I had worked with earlier when he was ambassador in Nigeria when I was stationed there. He made a few trips to Washington during this time and I had a chance to meet with him for some policy discussions and intelligence discussion, and it's always nice to meet again with a senior official like that.

I found that in certain cases INR, like other bureaucracies, tends to be driven occasionally by anniversaries. Occasionally, you find out it's 10 years since this or 15 years since that,

and it's worth while to write about what has happened since that time. So, for example, in my case 1987 would have been 20 years since the Israeli occupation of the West Bank since the Six Day War. In fact, this is when the initial, the first of the so-called “Intifadas” began in the territories, in the West Bank and Gaza. So there's always a lot to do when you're dealing with a country like Israel that has such a high profile in the department, in the White House, and in the Congress. Almost anything of significance will be accepted as a submission for the secretary's briefing book, assuming it's well written, of course. There's an editorial staff in the front office of INR to go over these materials. Overall, it was a valuable experience for me to get the other side of the policymaking apparatus, to get to the intelligence side, and to work with people in the same office who were doing similar work on Jordan, on Syria. The office had the whole Middle East as our portfolio to draw upon. So I really learned in very specific ways to appreciate the value, the function of intelligence, the reason and why it needs to be kept independent from the policymaking apparatus in the department.

And I personally felt a certain amount of satisfaction and appreciation when, in more recent years, talking about the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq or what would happen after the invasion of Iraq, apparently the consensus in the media at least was that the little, small State Department INR analysis far outclassed the work of the CIA and the military intelligence machines. There were the questions of was there WMD (weapons of mass destruction) in Iraq and what would the situation be like after we overthrew the government? And I think it confirmed my suspicion that it's less a matter of sophisticated equipment - although, obviously you need some sophisticated apparatus, and technical capabilities, and whatever else may be available to the intelligence communitbut above all you need smart people, intelligent people who know a subject or an area very well, and who know how to put the pieces together. And I think that the consensus seemed to speak very well of the comparatively very, very small INR capacity in State compared to other intelligence agencies in the government.

Q: What sort of impression did you get of what you were getting from the CIA?

WEINTRAUB: Well, basically the materials we got- obviously we got the raw materials and then we eventually got to compare our own work with what was being produced as well by the CIA. And, you know, they had an ability to come up with no doubt a more polished, a more slick-looking product, they had the equipment to do the fancy graphics and the maps and the satellite photos and everything else in their production, and we were using our Wang word processors at the time. And you know, none of us at State had the opportunity to learn anything really sophisticated on this machinery, and the CIA finished products — by the very nature of the way they looked — seemed to carry, I would imagine, a certain amount of “respectability” with them. I could just imagine that when all these competing products were received at the White House, or at the different levels of the Cabinet, that one would have to really look beneath the surface of the finished product and would have to have a feel for what a society was like to really appreciate the value that was inherent in the State work.

I'm not sure that — you know, it's hard to remember now, it was 19 years ago, I can't remember ever seeing an analysis by the agency that did little more than push forward something incrementally. I can't remember seeing a product that went against the so-called conventional wisdom, that would make me say, wow, this is really interesting, another whole new way of looking at this. I thought it was seen to be somewhat what one would expect. Typically material, I thought, materials were over classified. I think that's a suspicion a lot of us in State have of what the agency does. And obviously, you know, they have a larger budget to take care of this kind of thing than we do. Overall, however, it was obviously helpful for us to read the work of others, and it expanded our horizons, but I can't say I remember being particularly impressed by any of what I saw.

Q: Well, you mentioned the first Intifada. What was happening on your watch, '86 to '88? I mean, including that but what developments were happening? Who was in power?

WEINTRAUB: I'm trying to remember. I think it was Likud. I think it was Yitzhak Shamir in the Likud party. And, obviously, there were always stories about fighting between the Labor and Likud parties. There were always stories about the tensions within Israeli society between the orthodox and the more secular groups, competitions for budgetary resources, for influence over the government. We had the so-called, kind of a peace process with Egypt; there was an exchange of ambassadors for some time. There was always a lot happening. I can't remember particular events, other than the Intifada and the "uprising," if you will, of the Palestinians. I think the major political action — as far as the occupation of Lebanon, when Israeli troops went all the way up to Beirut — had already receded by that time; that happened about the time I was leaving Israel.

Q: About '81, '82.

WEINTRAUB: Right, when I was leaving Israel. It was 1982 when the Israelis went in full strength into Lebanon, and this period of mine in INR was four years later. So by this time the evacuation of the Palestinians from Beirut and Lebanon had occurred. The PLO, Yasser Arafat had gone into exile, into, I think it was Tunisia or Morocco.

Q: Tunisia.

WEINTRAUB: It was Tunisia, yes. And, I can't say, other than, again, the Palestinian uprising, that there's any one thing that stands out such as when we were stationed there, when we were on the ground: the assassination of Sadat, the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor, the invasion of Lebanon. I mean, these were major activities.

Q: Well, how were we seeing the first Intifada? I never could pronounce that correctly.

WEINTRAUB: In-ti-fah-dah.

Q: Intifada. Because as I recall, this one was one the Israelis had a hard time dealing with since it was mainly kids throwing rocks and so you had soldiers shooting maybe rubber

bullets or something but armed soldiers shooting at kids with rocks, which is not so much as the whole Arab-Israeli thing as based on public relations and perceptions in the world and this certainly was not a good time for the Israelis.

WEINTRAUB: It was difficult to handle and I don't know, looking back in retrospect — I'm not sure if that phenomenon marked the start, maybe, or the turning point, in how much of the rest of the world viewed Israel. Israel at the time of the Six Day War was kind of lauded around the world as the hero, as the David against the Goliath, and its influence, if you will, its ability to conduct international relations, you know, might have reached a peak. And I'm not sure if that whole scene of, as you say, soldiers confronting youngsters throwing rocks was the start of a point that eventually reached the point where we are now.

At least in the United States and much of Europe, I think, the left wing often respected Israel against the so-called reactionary Arab states around it, and now that's almost reversed. Typically now in a lot of academic circles and the American left wing Israel is reviled as the occupier, if you will, and the Palestinians are now seen as the underdog. And maybe that was, now that you mention it, maybe that was the start of the public perception changing. Also in the first OPEC oil embargo after the 1973 Yom Kippur war I have no doubt that the ability of OPEC to amass this wealth, to spread resources through a lot of Third World countries had significant results — no doubt they were able to influence at least the sub-Saharan African countries that then broke relations with Israel. Israel had a lot of pretty good friends in sub-Saharan Africa; they had a lot of agricultural experts there. I mean, they could make the desert bloom, so to speak, and they had a lot of aid programs and agricultural support programs. Not a great deal in the amount of money they could spend. Of course, they were not a wealthy country. But they had a lot of valuable expertise, which was really appreciated in a lot of the sub-Saharan African countries. I think after the Yom Kippur War, OPEC and Arab wealth and influence was just able to undercut that. Arabs sending a lot of money for development projects and I

wouldn't be surprised if a lot of that was conditioned on the governments shutting down the operations of these Israeli embassies.

Q: Well, do you recall seeing, particularly the Palestinian cause, as being a much — you know, at one point it wasn't considered a big deal. I mean a big threat. But do you recall, were we looking at this now from another perspective of saying we've really got to do something about this because the population is growing and the settlement process is not going to help the situation at all?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I think I remember we were starting to get concerned when the settlements on the West Bank were approaching 100,000 people. I think now the latest figures I've seen are 250,000 on the West Bank. I think there was a consensus among most of the analysts I was working with on the Middle East that this probably would be unable to be sustained indefinitely, that Israel needs to come to terms with the Palestinians. I think there was a recognition of the demographics of the situation as well, that this was working against Israel. There was another analyst who wrote particularly about Jordan and the Palestinians. We often did work together or discussed things together. I think we were aware of this happening but it was hard to know where the dynamics were going. I think Jordan had not- maybe it did- I'm trying to think when Jordan under King Hussein had officially renounced his claim to the West Bank — a claim which was not recognized by anyone in the world, not even the other Arab countries. Of course, once that happened then the West Bank was truly up for grabs. There was a time within Israel when one of the solutions would be to negotiate with Hussein of Jordan and work out some situation on the West Bank. Once that was off the table I think we were aware of it, that this was an issue that Israel would have to address. I can't recall though, enough of the materials that I wrote about.

Q: Well, in '88, where'd you go?

WEINTRAUB: In '88, I had an interesting assignment into one of the functional bureaus. I went to the bureau of human rights as it was then known. It's now, I guess, human rights, labor and democracy, or good governance and some other thing. It was then just simply the bureau of human rights and humanitarian affairs under the very respected leadership of Ambassador Richard Schifter, who'd been around for quite some time. And again, like most of my assignments in the department, I really enjoyed it. I found each new assignment a challenge. I think this is one of the things I enjoyed about the type of a career I had, unlike friends of mine in the government and civil service who were in the same office for decades, often doing much of the same work, maybe gaining a bit more experience and more seniority. Virtually every couple of years in the department it was a new type of a learning situation, a new learning curve one had to climb. So the whole human rights and asylum process was new at this level.

I had written some human rights reports when I was abroad in Nigeria and Ecuador, but for the most part you were following a formula that the department sent to you: here's what you had to respond to in the report. But now you were in touch probably on a daily basis with all the human rights activists. They all came to HA to petition, to complain. You had Human Rights Watch, you had Amnesty International, and a plethora of others. Lawyers for Human Rights, Physicians for Human Rights, and others. All these people who had an oar in the process. I had the assignment to monitor all the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, so obviously I got reporting from all those embassies. Obviously, I became immersed in the subject. Actually I worked with Ambassador Schifter and with a current undersecretary in the department Paula Dobriansky, who was then a deputy assistant secretary in the human rights bureau.

I made some trips during that assignment to the more problematic of the countries on the beat, to ColombiI went back to Colombia after having served there earlier. I went to Chile, at the time when the Pinochet regime was kind of on the way out. I went to Havana, made a trip into Cuba, had some interesting discussions there with some of the beleaguered

human rights activists in Cuba; found that whole situation very interesting. Much of our work was driven by the annual human rights reports which have to meet a schedule and write on a particular agenda. And I also learned, you know, about the whole asylum procedurabout the inter-American court of human rights, the commission for human rights, and so on. So I got involved in that whole process, that whole human rights type of a track within the department. You know, I worked really closely with Schifter, Dobriansky, other DASes, deputy assistant secretaries in the office. And I got back a little into the Latin American affairs orbit after having served in Colombia and Ecuador. So it was, I thought it was a good step and a very good experience.

Q: I would imagine that, in the first place, that you would spend quite a bit of time on two places. One would be Haiti and the other would be Cuba. Or was Cuba sort of almost out of the orbit because there wasn't much we could do?

WEINTRAUB: Well actually, concerning Cuba, everybody kind of knew what Cuba was all about. You knew that our reporting was going to be hard hitting on Cuba. We were going to find- I mean, to a certain extent, some of the things were obviously political- you knew that no one would find a good word to say about Cuba. Actually, what was very interesting at the time- (end side one, tape five)

...very interesting at the time, now that you mention it, was the situation in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras. This was at the time of the Contras and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the civil war in El Salvador. And it was just very interesting that there were enough human rights violations to go around in Central America, in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras. These situations, these countries were all marked, to a certain degree, by autocratic rule for probably over 100 years or more, pretty much large masses or people living at or slightly above or below the poverty level. And there are enough human rights violations throughout Central America. But there was no doubt in my mind that the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, what was then ARA and is now WHA, Western Hemisphere Affairs, there was no doubt in my mind, as I saw it anyway, that the

bureau was very protective of a country like El Salvador and only too quick to condemn activities of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. And there was enough, probably, in Guatemala as well, and of course we were supporting as a matter of policy the governments in El Salvador and Guatemala from, as we saw it, subversion by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Nevertheless, there were some serious incidents of alleged human rights abuses. There was a case of a nun in Guatemala, an American nun, and similar cases in El Salvador. We had some figures from the Hill who got involved because I think the nun may have come originally from Massachusetts, or her family was from Massachusetts.

Q: She was killed, was she?

WEINTRAUB: Yes, yes. And it was a very prominent, high profile case at the time. And I just remember the office- I think the most difficult human rights reports, annual human rights reports I had to put together were on the Central American countries. And I remember typically these were done by e-mail, back and forth between the embassy, the country desk, the human rights bureaand eventually you resolve a text that people can live with. But I remember for the Central American countries, this was a particularly protracted process and I remember I had to go down there for several face-to-face meetings with people because we just couldn't agree on how to word the events in a way that satisfied both sides.

There was another situation, I remember, in Mexico. It was about an election, I recall. It was about elections. And I believe Mr. Negroponte was ambassador in Mexico at the time in the late '80s. I remember we wrote the first draft of the human rights report. It came in from the embassy, and we adjusted the language. It was quite critical about the elections, about whether the elections were free and fair or not. And we put in language that we thought was pretty hard hitting but accurate. Well, I remember the reaction of the desk officer — he just couldn't live with this, he couldn't live with this and I remember he said the ambassador's going to go off the wall if he sees this. And I was confident that this language we had worked out was — Ambassador Schifter was head of the human rights

bureau, he was okay with it, and other senior officers in the bureau were okay with it. And eventually I said look, this describes how the election took place. It's based on information we have obtained, to the best of our ability. You show me if it is inaccurate, irrelevant and there was a third quality; I forget what it was. I said if any of those conditions are true we'll be happy to change it. But you take it, and the ambassador is welcome to have a go at it, but you show me if it's inaccurate, irrelevant or some other thing. And they couldn't come up with anything.

So this episode characterizes for me the whole process in the department, which I think is a healthy process, a kind of a dynamic, a kind of a tension between, on the one hand, a bureau that has certain vested interests in positive relations with a host country, particularly with our neighbor to the south, Mexico. You know, we prefer that they not get upset if they don't have to. But yet there's another bureau, the human rights bureau, which has an agenda that's determined by the Congress to tell it like it is, to write a human rights report that's accurate, hard hitting when it needs to be, embarrassing if it needs to be, and not to sweep things under the table. And, I mean, that was a very good learning experience of how the situation gets done, how issues are resolved. Because these - obviously we were responding to different masters, if you will. Now, obviously, they all report to the secretary of state, and, if I remember accurately, there were always serious issues, although I was not personally involved with them, for example, with the human rights report for Israel.

Q: Now that's been a given for-

WEINTRAUB: Right, particularly as regards to Israeli-controlled areas, such as the West Bank and Gaza. And I remember, there were a few reports that, at the end of the season, were always the last ones to get resolved. You know, you put the easy ones to bed, then you work on the more contentious ones, like Russia, Israel, maybe Mexico and Brazil, maybe South Africa. There's maybe half a dozen high profile cases. And I thought it was just interesting, in how either we handled it ourselves at the level we were working or how,

if need be, if it's bumped up to the next higher level and how you prepare your senior officer to go head to head with one from the other bureau. I mean, it was certainly as educational as any of the human rights stuff that you learn.

Q: Well, how would- when you were dealing with the murder of a nun, what was it, Guatemala?

WEINTRAUB: I think so.

Q: What could one not say? Was it a matter of, it would be interpretation but did we know who did it?

WEINTRAUB: Well, things were not clear, the evidence was inconclusive. There was one particular case about - it had to do, not this one of the murder, but it was the kidnapping of a nun and the whole thing, something about it smelled fishy. It appeared to be staged in that she was kidnapped but as I recall part of the kidnapping, she was on a bus with someone. I mean, her side of the story was that she was terror stricken and someone sat next to her with a pistol in her ribs and made sure she sat quietly while they were riding on the bus and other people say, well, this is absurd, she would have had a chance to escape. There are a lot of things about the story which was not what one would call a “bulletproof” case.

Q: I remember this. She was an American from, again, Massachusetts.

WEINTRAUB: I think so.

Q: And she went sort of on the circuit of later-

WEINTRAUB: The _____ yes.

Q: And- but it didn't smell right just in the story.

WEINTRAUB: Yes, something about it smelled fishy and I don't know if someone was using it for an agenda, if it was staged. Obviously, the department had to be careful about making accusations that this was a staged event, but yet we had to say that it wasn't conclusive. Certainly, if in the human rights bureau we would have felt there was a so-called smoking gun that pointed to a real abduction by government agents, we would have confronted the regional bureau with that. But it was a fishy case and obviously the regional bureau had the lead in the press relations and the press releases, things of that nature. So that was typical. And there were a lot of cases in El Salvador where the abductors were just unknown. Now, of course, most of the people murdered, abducted, or disappeared were people who were against the government and supported human rights, labor union activists, other human rights activists, maybe lawyers defending the poor. So sure, we didn't know who the specific perpetrators were but, you know, it's kind of interesting that most of the people who were the victims fell on one side of the political agenda.

Q: Well, what about Haiti? This has got to be very tricky, you know. This was the time, I guess, of boat people, wasn't it?

WEINTRAUB: Yes, that's a whole agenda- that fell a little into the asylum office, and that was not my specialty. But the whole issue of asylum and why asylum was automatic for Cubans but not for Haitians is a real story. The Haitians were deemed to be economic migrants, while if you were from Cuba and you got within U.S. territorial waters you kind of had a free ride. That's basically the way the law is written; there's not much we could do about that. But there were issues between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. I mean it was fairly obvious that, as it has been for hundreds of years, Haiti was under disastrous misrule.

“Boat people” were a problem, and of the majority of the Haitians coming, if you look at the way the asylum law was written, probably very few of them would be able to qualify as being subject to abuse of human rights. I mean, in Haiti as I can recall, most people in the country were abused. It was an abusive system, a corrupt system, so I think the language

of asylum law is you have reason to fear persecution because of political affiliation, your religion, political party, trade union activities, whatever it might be. Well, I guess in Haiti just everyone could fear abuse from everybody. So, you know, that was not going to help people who happen to live under a generally repressive regime. I'm sorry to say, but, specifically, you have to be the target of this specific persecution, not just everybody in the country. So obviously we always had a lot of work to do with the activists, human rights groups, such as Human Rights Watch. Whenever these reports were issued periodically by Amnesty International or the other human rights organizations, we had to prepare press guidance on them and they were big news for us in the bureau. Maybe they were not a big deal for the department, but that's what we had to prepare for.

Q: How did you find, say, Amnesty International's report and all? Did you find that their perspective was somewhat overblown other reports or was it in line or what?

WEINTRAUB: I thought Amnesty was a pretty respectable organization. I thought that Human Rights Watch would occasionally use a bit of hyperbole in some of their reports. There was another one, American Committee for something on Western Hemisphere. You know, there were a variety of smaller NGOs doing this as well; often they had secondhand material, we were unable to verify the authenticity of the material. I thought if something came from Amnesty International it was probably, probably accurate, documented and researched sufficiently to satisfy me. But we often cited work from these smaller NGOs in the human rights reports, and I think there were some people in the regional bureau who might tend to dismiss something because it came from a Human Rights Watch. They felt, well, they had an agenda. But I learned the value, I learned the utility of talking to these people because having been there, if you will, having been in South America, having been in Africa, I knew as an embassy official you often- people who were fearful of the government didn't want to meet with you or if they met with you they tended to give you a line. And sometimes these people might be underground so I knew as an embassy official you were just handicapped in the variety of sources of information you could get. But yet if these people from these NGOs could go there, either they themselves or their liaisons

in the local community would be able to secure interviews with some of these people — maybe who were underground, fearful of their lives, fearful for their families, and I thought this is a valuable source of information to find out. One has to screen it, one has to validate it as best as possible, but I thought it was invaluable that we speak to these people and not dismiss them outright — and give them a fair amount of credibility.

Q: Did you find yourself caught sort of between well, at odds with the asylum bureau because, particularly coming out of Guatemala and El Salvador, a lot of people were coming out and going to settle in the United States. And the accusation was that a lot of the people were economic refugees and taking advantage- it was a terrible situation anyway and they were getting out and then claiming refugee status and the human rights report would be an important factor in how they would make their claim. Did you get into that?

WEINTRAUB: Oh yes, as a matter of fact I recall during my assignment in the human rights bureau I got to attend some hearings before immigration judges; I think this was a good educational experience for me as well. I don't think there was much of a disconnect between the office of asylum affairs, which was part of the human rights bureau, in that people who claimed asylum had to say what the reasons were: was their family the subject of an assault, were they the subject of a vendetta, of an attack, and they — as far as I know, it was not enough for them to just have a lawyer defending them who then read the human rights report and said, well, “Here, look at this evidence. This is a terrible situation. My client has a right to claim asylum.” You know, it's not a generic asylum request; it's a specific asylum request for an applicant and his or her family. And much as we could deplore the overall human rights situation in a country, whether in a Haiti or in Guatemala, unless you could say that you feared for your life to go back, or that you have a “well founded fear” of persecution — I think that is the phrase — you have to answer the question of what is the fear based upon? And it couldn't be just a pervasive fear of

government persecution, it has to be based on something more specific than that as far as I can recall.

So I don't think we had a problem with the asylum office. We spoke very often. They would speak to us — the applicant said such and such happened, these people came to his home one night and whatever, and then we would have to find out if this was accurate or not. And in cases like this, often the embassy didn't know, but you could often find this out in talking to the human rights activists. Obviously, you had to protect your sources, you wouldn't say you were doing this, you'd say, “What do you know about these kinds of activities, those kinds of activities.” So they could shed light on that. So I learned to respect the NGO community as an effective agent to supplement the limited capabilities of embassy sources to penetrate and get out to all levels of society. And I knew for myself, as working on human rights reports in countries, either in Ecuador or in Nigeria, that you can reach maybe the first or second strata of society but it's hard to get out into marginal areas. You know, sometimes you're concerned about your own security, and there's only a certain amount of time you can use and a certain amount of budget to spend on these things. So why not rely upon eyes and ears that have much further ability to extend much further than you do?

Q: How about during the time you're there, how were things in Brazil?

WEINTRAUB: I think Brazil was okay. I think they hathey were in the process of returning or had returned to civilian rule. I find it hard to remember. I think they returned to civilian rule. I don't remember Brazil being a major problem as far as the political and civilian life of the country and civil society. I think the biggest problem at the time in Brazil was the treatment of the Indians. There were some serious problem there. And again, information was pretty difficult to come by. The embassy itself had very little. These problems were in pretty remote areas and there were a lot of stories about the interests of the logging industry, the extractive industries, that they rode roughshod over Indian claims to territory, other things. And quite a few activists were shot and killed during that period, one very

famous one; I think a rubber tapper was found executed during that period. And I guess one could make a pretty good claim that the government never was doing enough to protect the Indians. I guess a lot of these extractive industries had their own security forces and they had a “mandate” to exploit the land for what it was worth and the hell with whoever lived there. I think that was the biggest issue there.

In Colombia it was the FARC and the private militias fighting over battlegrounds and the issue of drugs got involved as well. That had simply accelerated from the time I had lived there. Chile was getting better, pretty much on the road to getting out from under the Pinochet regime, similar to Argentina. I think we were seeing the end of the Stroessner regime in Paraguay when I was there. And the islands — Haiti, Dominican Republic and Cuba — were always interesting. But El Salvador probably demanded the most consistent amount of my attention, or Central America as a whole.

Q: Well then, in 1990, you, I guess, ready to go overseas again?

WEINTRAUB: Well, no, actually not. I lost my mother in 1987 after we got back. My father was not doing well, so we stayed for another assignment. And I became the desk officer for Nigeria in the office of West African affairs. I thought this was an interesting circle to come back to. You know, I had a career pattern that I found interesting: service in Colombia and Ecuador, and then into the human rights bureau for Latin America; service in Israel, and then INR analyst for Israel; service in Nigeria, and then several years later back as a desk officer for Nigeria. Again, for the same reason I found living in Nigeria very exciting — this is the 800 pound gorilla of West Africa, if you will. So I thoroughly enjoyed the time I had there.

Q: You were on the desk from what?

WEINTRAUB: From 1990 to 1992. This was the Babangida regime. It was a military government of Ibrahim Babangida; I'm pretty sure for all the time that I was there. Our ambassador was Lennon Walker. I made a couple of trips out there. There were some

elections that were held there that I went to observe for a period. And we had a Babangida visit to the United States. And you know, like always, anything that happens in Nigeria is of interest to the Africa bureau. You know, the Africa bureau has a lot of very small accounts that the White House will never hear about. The word might get out, occasionally, of events in Benin or Togo to interested members of Congress, but many of them know about Nigeria and other big accounts of South Africa, Kenya, and Egypt. Of course, Egypt's in another bureau though. In any case, Nigeria is certainly among the major players. Petroleum, population, the same things that attracted me to serve there and to have this job again were very important for the bureau. This period also was after the civil war started in Liberia. The invasion of Liberia by Charles Taylor and his rebels began in, I think it was Christmas Day of 1999, and this eventually led to a civil war of several years. So I was on the Nigeria desk when this was happening, and we were wondering what to do about it: Should the Nigerians help out with their regional organization of ECOWAS? Should the Organization of African Unity get involved? I remember there was some issue of whether the United States was going to get involved in Liberia. Obviously these things were kind of floating around the office of West African affairs. But I think our assistant secretary was Hank Cohen at the time, a very respected senior diplomat. Apart from the Nigeria account which kept me quite busy, and the events in Liberia, it's hard to remember any one other thing that comes to mind about my two years as Nigeria Desk Officer.

Q: Were Nigeria and its rulers completely squandering the oil wealth?

WEINTRAUB: I think for the most part that was our perspective on that issue. I remember I had a number of discussions with the ambassador of Nigeria in Washington. I was on the desk when the Nigerians had brought in a new ambassador. I remember he was talking to me on one occasion, and he said, he essentially tried to put on the State Department the responsibility to encourage American investors to invest in Nigeria. And I said, you know, with all due respect sir, I think that's your job. My job, with others in the U.S. government, is to advise the American investor about the risks, benefits and liabilities inherent in investing all over the world. For me, specifically, it is to explain what the situation in Nigeria

is like. And when we see a climate, an investment climate that is conducive to private investment, and when we see — if you don't mind my saying so — Nigerians investing in Nigeria and not taking their money and putting it in banks in London and Switzerland and other places, then we might begin to change our views about investing in Nigeria. But until we find an investment regime that is protective of the private sector, that has adequate laws to protect investments, that has a judicial system that works, that is not typified by favoritism of one kind or another, — at that point, then we'll encourage American investors. Until then we have to fully exercise our responsibility to alert them. And I don't think things have changed very much over the years. Maybe they've gotten a little better recently, but I haven't heard any great, great success stories coming out of there.

Q: Did you get at all involved in the widespread rackets that Nigeria's-

WEINTRAUB: Oh yes.

Q: doing. In a way they're somewhat like the gypsies except a lot smarter.

WEINTRAUB: Yes, this is when the scamming letters began to occur, in the early '90s, I think it was. And they were kind of novel and they were kind of interesting and amusing up to a point. You know, you'd get these bizarre letters that —, I'm sure you're seen them, or you received a lot of them.

Q: Oh, every one you could think of, e-mail.

WEINTRAUB: Right, e-mail, but that was before e-mail days, of course. So we had to work with — to convince the Secret Service that this was an issue they had to deal with. Of course, a lot of it was smuggling. And, basically, a lot of it was nonsense-type work, with Americans calling the State Department to ask about these letters. I think we did the best we could to try to get some other bureau or agency, maybe Secret Service or Department of Justice, to handle these inquiries so we could devote our time to foreign policy and not

law enforcement. We had these scams, and a fair number of Nigerians in the U.S. were involved in credit card fraud, also in health insurance fraud.

In the case of health insurance, someone would have a health policy, and they'd travel back to Nigeria, while being insured with a policy that allegedly offered coverage while out of the country. They would then submit some bill for thousands of dollars from a clinic somewhere — who knows where — in Nigeria, and the insurance company wouldn't have a clue about this. Sometimes we — the department and then the embassy — would get involved in trying to help the insurance company, by finding out, for example, if such a hospital actually existed. And it was just a drain of resources to have to do this law enforcement type work or insurance investigation work. Also a similar scam existed for life insurance. People would take out life insurance policies on someone and then a certain amount of time later the insurance company would get a death certificate with all kinds of stamps and ribbons on it from some district in Nigeria that the person had died. Then the company would hear that the person who had the policy would like to collect. You know, there was just so much fraudulent documentation. So this took a fair amount of time to do.

But the Nigerians — all told, I mentioned before there's a certain amount of likeableness about them. No matter they were rascals and scheming, and you'd have to put your hands in your pockets when you walked by them. And they were so damned inventive; you wished they would find something legal to do to make money. But they seemed to have much more ingenuity then industriousness. It's interesting that almost all these scams were exclusively run bor at least started bNigerians. From what I understand now, particularly in more recent years, a lot of them became involved in drug smuggling. So they seem to have a penchant for making a quick buck and making it in an illegal way.

Q: I understand too a lot of automobile smuggling, too.

WEINTRAUB: Could be, could be. I haven't heard that one, particularly. So it wawe had a good time in the Africa bureau. I think I was very impressed by the Africa bureau in

the way it works to satisfy the needs of its people out in the field. It realizes that most embassies are in pretty tough living conditions and they do their best. I think the admin staff, general service staff, and post management officers do a hell of a job under very, very difficult conditions. Trying to get American shipments out of customs, for example, can truly be a nightmare. I mean, the rules are made up, it seems, as they go along. The rules are designed to extract the greatest amount of leverage and the greatest amount of payoff from whoever needs something out of the harbor. You know, the living conditions definitely are tough, but I think the departmenand the people in the Africa bureau in particularldoes a fairly good job of trying to help people living in those conditions.

Q: Well then, in 1992?

WEINTRAUB: Right, we were just about ready to go abroad, but we wanted one more year. Our son was graduating high school so we - I put in the appeal; it was the six year rule to the seven year rule, on appeal. I put in the appeal and I was able to get it for our eldest son to graduate high school in the same school that he started. And I was able to get a one-year assignment which was one of the more interesting ones I had, in the IO bureau, International Organizations bureau. It was in the office of UN political affairs, basically dealing with Security Council issues. And the way the office was organized, and perhaps it still is, is there's a director and deputy director and then different officers covering different regions of the world. And I was the officer for African affairs. So this built further on my experience. Actually, it was a little bit difficult to find an assignment. A lot of people were not interested in taking someone who was only going to serve for one year. But the office director did actually come and speak to me and we worked out something. I believe he was happy to have me there. I think he had served in Nigeria earlier, and actually he's now ambassador to Nigeria, John Campbell is his name.

Anyway, I got there and there were a lot of UN peacekeeping operations going on; Mozambique, Angola, Western Sahara, other activities, but probably within a week of my arrival in the office, the biggest one of all popped open right in front of my face and

that was our intervention in Somalia. And this - I mean, it seems like each assignment is more interesting than the last one. I mean, I guess that's good as a kind of career pattern. Probably I did as much work in that one year as I did in any other two years. You know, this was the time of the emergence of what we called “Diplomacy by CNN.” CNN was just really coming into its own, as news all the time with pictures all the time and you had — Somalia had become the archetype of the failed state, one kind of a corrupt regime after another, a military ruler, and eventually there were enough disturbances in the streets that the military ruler simply fled the country. I think it was at the end of '91. And there was just inability to form a government. It was pretty much close to anarchy, I guess.

And Somalia apparently is organized — a lot of society is organized into clans, and I guess each of the clans felt it necessary to form a militia. There were constant battles in Mogadishu and elsewhere in the country as well. Commerce and trade had just about ground to a halt. The banking system had ceased to function. Transportation was very dangerous. So people were really hurting. People were starving. Food couldn't be moved about. Even if there were food production in one area you couldn't get it to other areas because anythinincluding emergency food moving on the road — was being hijacked by one of the clans or another. So we had pictures from CNN of starving families, babies — they were very heartbreaking pictures. We started shortly after I arrived, the U.S. started an airdrop. The White House got the Pentagon onboard to get involved with an airdrop. The UN was expanding its presence; they had observers there to try to monitor some ceasefires that were never holding for very long.

And then I remember an event, it was Thanksgiving of 1992. Things were coming to a head and the United States was about to make an offer to the UN secretary general. We would be prepared to lead an intervention mission, a serious intervention mission with a lot of muscle to do something about it. And this was, interestingly enough, a time that, it was Thanksgiving. My sister-in-law and her husband and two children and my father-in-law were all coming to our home for Thanksgiving. We had made a tradition of visiting each other's homes for Thanksgiving. This was our time to host it. Well, over Thanksgiving

weekend I was hardly home, I was hardly home. I think it was the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, during the period that Secretary James Baker had left the office of secretary of state to lead the Bush re-election campaign in '92. So Secretary Larry Eagleburger became acting secretary (he later would become secretary). He went to Boutros Ghali on Wednesday and essentially made the offer that we would be prepared to lead an intervention if he would positively recommend it to the Security Council. Well, he did, I think. By Wednesday afternoon we got the positive response back and we really went into high gear, really went into high gear trying to assemble a coalition, to get the military onboard to do what needed to be done, to see what other troops would be available to join us. So, it was quite a busy time with all the demarches we had to do.

You know, we wanted, obviously some Muslim countries there as well. I think we got the Turks to assume a leadership role. The logistics were tremendous: refueling ships, support, humanitarian assistance, it was a huge effort. So that weekend was practically a non-stop work period for me once we got word that the UN was going to support us. And then in the next week or two, we had to prepare a resolution that the Security Council would pass to endorse this operation. And I remember it was quite a bit of work to craft that resolution. Obviously, our military was in the leading role, and they wanted to have as free a hand as possible to do whatever they felt like doing with as little responsibility to pick up the pieces afterward. And obviously the State Department didn't quite see it that way, to say nothing of the other members of the Security Council seeing it that way. So I remember there was quite a few discussions over at main State in that little facility in the ops center with facilities for secure video conferencing. I forget what the room is called now; anyway, we used that room to “meet” with the Pentagon and the CIA and everybody else also in their little rooms, exchanging things over closed circuit television.

This was pretty heavy stuff. And as the Africa officer in the IO bureau dealing with Security Council issues I worked very heavily with, first of all, the Africa bureau, then of course with our legal affairs bureau, with our office at the U.S. mission to the UN and certainly with the Pentagon. This was probably the first time I realized — as I discoverethat I had

to work with almost two distinct channels in the Pentagon. Having never served in the military I didn't realize this: there's a civilian channel, the so-called OSD channel, for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and there's the military channel under the Joint Chiefs. Obviously they work together, but often you could satisfy one but not the other; what worked for one would not work for the other. And I remember that on the civilian side, similar to how it was in the State Department, when things needed to get done in a hurry you broke with protocol, you needed things done and people did things.

I remember that if things had to get done, and it was after regular office hours, and there was some kind of emergency — say there was a vote in Europe, or in the Security Council and I had to — not exactly barge in — but I had to go in to office of the deputy assistant secretary or the assistant secretary — obviously a few levels above my pay grade — well that's what you do. Obviously you knock on the door, you don't want to interrupt, but that was kind of the matter of course, the way things were done at State. But I remember hearing from someone at the Pentagon explaining to me that, to get something done, first a major has to talk to a lieutenant colonel, then the lt. colonel talks to the colonel who then talks to the one-star general who then talks to the two-staand, you get the picture. So I understood that environment to be very much a kind of protocol-ruled, hide-bound way of doing things, and it was very frustrating to find out how things got done there. Obviously, there's a great, great respect for the chain of command, much more so, I found, among the uniformed services than in the State Department, which itself certainly promotes respect for the line of authority. But this whole idea of having to satisfy both the joint chiefs side and the secretary of defense side, and that one side is more or less the policy side — this is what we want to do — and the second side is “Where are the resources going to come from?” It's fine in principle, the OSD or Office of the Secretary of Defense says, “Fine, we ought to do this now.” But then, where do they find the manpower, where do they find the aircraft, the ships, the resources, the vehicles, the fuel, who's going to do this, who's going to pay for it? So this kind of opened my eyes to the complexity of using military machinery as an instrument of foreign policy as obviously we were doing it in this instance.

At the same time, while I was still trying to tend to peacekeeping issues in Somalia, Mozambique, and in Angola, there was also a visit of Security Council members to Angola. We had to prepare for this visit as well. So there was a lot of action there. There were also many documents and Security Council resolutions to handle dealing with the former Spanish Sahara, and the aftermath of the conflict over that territory between Morocco and Algeria. This was definitely the busiest year I probably ever had and I think I saw the tremendous complexity of handling complex humanitarian emergencies. I worked with the senior levels of the IO bureau, who at that time the assistant secretary was John Bolton; with the senior levels of the Africa bureau; with officers in the Pentagon; with people in USUN in New York; with people in AID; Andrew Natsios, now the head of AID, was the head at the time the office of foreign disaster assistance in AID. So we were really handling a lot of different threads of humanitarian work, military work, diplomatic work, multilateral work; it really was a, fascinating period of my life.

Q: Well, were you picking up from people who dealt with the horn of Africa that this was a very complicated area, Somalia I mean? You know, it turned out to be a kind of disaster, damned close to being a disaster.

WEINTRAUB: Well, the Africa bureau, which kind of had the policy lead on how we handled Somalia, apparently was pretty positive about getting engaged in so-called nation building. And this is what, I guess, got the Clinton administration skewered to a certain degree on these types of activities, which probably led to our future indecision about intervention in Bosnia or in Rwanda. But what started out as a humanitarian mission to feed the starving — you could feed the starving, but then how long are you going to feed them for? Eventually things have to settle down. It's hard to feed people while protecting them at the point of a gun. You can do that but for how long are you going to do that? Eventually you're going to leave and the Somalis have to make it themselves.

So with the support of the Africa bureau, I guess, we got more and more involved into trying to sponsor negotiations, affiliations, nation building efforts of one kind or another;

meetings in Kenya, meetings in Tanzania, meetings in Djibouti with different factions. And we got more and more engaged in what became ridiculed as a nation building exercise. You know, the famous words of “What's your exit strategy?” began to start appearing. And I guess we really didn't have a clearly defined exit strategy. The military didn't like it, certainly. They said we can do certain kinds of missions. We can't put countries back together again; that's not in our mission. But we can shoot people and can kill people and we can build security but how long do we have to do that for? It became a very divisive issue.

Of course, we left to go back abroad at the end of one year, in May or June of '93 before the incident of “Blackhawk Down” later that year. Things were starting to fray around the edges a little bit, and we were starting to get “push-back” from some of the factions. But, you know, I felt things were going well through all the time I was there. But some elements of the intervention were unusual. There was the strange situation of the Marines wading ashore in December 1992 and being met by CNN photographers on the beach. I remember following it and that was kind of — one of the strange realities of this world that we live in, with a military expeditionary force being met by the media. As I said, we felt things were going fairly well: the reduced figures on where people were being fed, how many refugees were being saved, operations of UNHCR, International Red Cross, Doctors Without Frontiers. All these groups were there working, so things were pretty much positive for most of the time until I left the area.

Q: Well then, in '93, you'd had your seven year-

WEINTRAUB: Right, the maximum time.

Q: Extension, so I guess you were ready to go over.

WEINTRAUB: Yes.

Q: Where to?

WEINTRAUB: If I can just go back a minute to recall something before I leave it. While I was on the Nigeria desk, from '90 to '92, one thing I remember comes back to me now as probably the most impressive job of multilateral lobbying and accomplishment that I'd seen that didn't involve military operations. This was the repeal of the infamous UN General Assembly resolution on Zionism as a form of racism. I was still on the Nigeria desk at the time, and John Bolton was assistant secretary, of course, in the IO bureau. I can remember just a multitude, a real multitude, of messages going out and multifaceted lobbying all over the world. And it was just like a non-stop effort foI don't remember how long it happened. It was quite an impressive accomplishmenthis didn't happen very often that a UNGA resolution that had been passed a number of years ago was overturned or repealed. But I remember it was a very impressive operation that went on. I remember being a part of it in that we were involved in getting to the Nigerians - to lobby for their vote at the UN. But I remember thinking that, you know, this was really an uphill battle to do this, but it happened, and I was very impressed by that operation. I think that's indicative of John Bolton. Once he gets his mind on something, I mean, if nothing else, what we've seen in the media about him is that he's determined, he's aggressive, he's a bulldog once he wants to do something. And obviously he wanted to do that. And he did it and I think it was a masterful accomplishment.

The other thing about Bolton was that I thought it was interesting in that there was a fair amount of opposition to our getting involved in Somalia. We had a political appointee whose name I can't remember, in Nairobi at the time.

Q: Oh yes.

WEINTRAUB: He wrote a book.

Q: Smith Hempstead.

WEINTRAUB: Yes. Hempstone.

Q: Hempstone.

WEINTRAUB: Right, right. He sent in quite a number of messages saying you folks are out of your mind.

Q: Well, I think he sent that famous one, if you like Beirut (at that time it was having a civil war), you'll love Mogadishu.

WEINTRAUB: Yes. And that's not what the department wanted to hear, and after all, he was a political appointee - he was a reporter, he was a journalist, what did he know? So that was kind of dismissed as, you know, not the kind of stuff we wanted to hear. Bolton definitely was not in favor; John Bolton was definitely not in favor. I'm not sure this is widely known, I don't think it's classified. But I think he made his views known to Eagleburger. Actually I think someone who pushed it fairly strongly at the time was someone who occupied his last position, undersecretary for security; I think it was Frank Wisner. I think he went on to become ambassador to Egypt. As I recall he was a fairly positive reckoner in that whole policy issue. And they of course met with Eagleburger. I have the impression that Bolton obviously did what he could, he expressed his views quite forcefully, but the decision went against him and he did what he needed to do. But all during this debate about whether Bolton should or should not be ambassador in New York, I don't know anything, obviously, about his role as undersecretary for arms and security and how he treated people, but I know in the IO bureau that people tended to get a fair hearing. But he was obviously articulate, aggressive, intelligent and, as I said, a bulldog in fighting for what he believed in. But as far as I could see, when the secretary said we're going to do this in Somalia, you know, you salute the secretary or you resign. And I think he played by the rules at that time. What he did afterward in his other position, of course, I don't know anything about that.

I guess this might be a good time to cut this short now. But we did go in to Somalia in '93. I was able to - I don't know if it was politicking on my part or not, but I worked from

the IO bureau in the office of UN security affairs, political affairs, and from there I got an assignment to the UN mission to the United Nations in Geneva.

Q: Alright. We'll pick it up then in '93.

WEINTRAUB: '93, yes.

Now, the family was starting to go about its different ways. We left our oldest son in the Washington area. He started his first year of college as we were leaving. Our second son was going off to start high school in Geneva and our third child, our daughter, was in middle school as we arrived in Genevjust to put that on the record somewhere.

The assignment I had in Geneva was kind of an interesting one. Most of the people in the U.S. mission to the United Nations focused on one or maybe a couple of the many agencies that were there. So, for example, we had a person from the public health service who was our liaison with the World Health Organization. We had another officer who was a labor specialist and had been a labor attach# in several other assignments who was now our representative to the International Labor Organization. These were the kinds of people, people with human rights backgrounds had that expertise, people with refugee work did those agencies, etc.

I had an interesting job in that I dealt with virtually all the agencies, dealing with management, budget, personnel, and overall administrative issues. The position was located in the section of the mission called political and specialized agencies. And it was, I think — I would describe it as the liaison, or where politics and administration kind of merge. There were a few items which were strictly administrative that I did, and some things that were highly political that I did. But a lot of the stuff was really making sure that budget was kept - that all these different agencies were kept within bounds, were kept within the framework that the U.S. government wanted to see; that they had minimal budgetary increases, or, as the mantra at the time was, “zero real growth.” Actually, we started with zero real growth, which meant you could have growth, but only to keep up with

inflation, but nothing beyond inflation. And I think by the time I left we were down to “zero nominal growth.” That means you flat-line the numbers, and if there is inflation that's just too bad.

So I did have a chance to apply this type of discipline to our relations with virtually all the agencies where we had assessments, less so where we made our contributions through voluntary payments. For example, a lot of the relief work with the High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), a lot of our contributions to the ICRC, the International Committee for the Red Cross were voluntary payments. Our contributions are not assessed; they are voluntary at the wish of the Congress. So I didn't have any control over these, there was no reason to exercise control; Congress was free to decide how little or how much it wished to give for emergency or humanitarian work. But when it came to assessed contributions, it was a battle all the time to keep the numbers under control and to make sure the personnel practices that were being followed were appropriate, and also to see that Americans who wished to work for the United Nations, particularly in the more senior positions, had an adequate opportunity to compete for positions.

This kind of job I did in Geneva was done through a framework of what I would refer to as a caucus. There's an informal group of countries that's called the “Geneva Group,” and it basically consists of the major contributors to the United Nations and specialized agencies. I think it was any member that contributed at least one percent of the budget. I believe there are a dozen members and the obvious ones, of course, were the U.S. and the UK, which were the two co-chairs of the Geneva Group and other major contributors, the obvious ones were such countries as Japan, Germany, and France. Then it dropped down considerably but we did have Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, Russia, and Italy were there. So I think altogether there were about a dozen countries and the last ones that were included in the group, their contribution was just about a little over one percent, but of course it started with the U.S., with almost a quarter of the total assessed contributions.

So wthe members of the Geneva Grouworked together through all the agencies. I worked directly with the U.S. deputy chief of mission. The two deputy chiefs of mission, or as the British would say, deputy head of chancery, were the two co-chairs of the Geneva Group, but in fact they usually were there to chair the meetings, make sure things went effectively, and to make sure we had senior level access to leaders of the agencies when we wanted to — if we wanted to talk to a director general or deputy director general. But in fact it was myself and another fellow, another first secretary at the British mission, who did most of the work and this was preparing agendas for meetings, making sure everyone agreed on the agenda, things of this nature.

And so we worked throughout the year, there was more than enough to keep us busy with all these agencies to follow. There were a couple of senior level meetings of the Geneva Group. In the spring the State Department's assistant secretary for international organizations came to Geneva, usually in March or April, and also the British and the others would send their appropriate senior level people as well. This would be for a senior level meeting of the Geneva Group, in which issues that were unable to be worked through at lower levels were discussed. It also would cover other major issues that needed to be raised that referred specifically to activities in Geneva or activities in Europe of the UN agencies.

Then there was a similar meeting at the assistant secretary level in the fall, usually in late September, early October. This was in New York, and it was typically organized around the meeting of the UN General Assembly in New York. All the assistant secretaries for international organizations in the various foreign ministries would obviously be in New York as part of their country's delegation. So we had our spring meeting in Geneva, our fall meeting in New York, and I was an integral part of the delegation for each of these, working again very closely with the deputy chief of mission in Geneva and with the IO bureau in Washington.

We started out, I guess, by the time I got to Geneva in '93 we were already in the Clinton administration. Mr. Bolton had already left. Bolton had been head of the IO bureau when I did Somalia activities, and he had left. We had a fellow in there who didn't stay for very long and then there was another assistant secretary; I think it was Princeton Lyman for awhile. Anyway, that occupied a lot of my official responsibility while I was in Geneva.

However, due to my previous background in sub-Saharan Africa, my diplomatic assignments, my work in Peace Corps, my doctorate dissertation, my previous work in Africa and my previous work in the human rights bureau, I requested additional work relating to the annual meeting of the UN Human Rights Commission. This was a big three ring circus in some respects. Now it's a somewhat discredited event since the Human Rights Commission in recent years, as we all know, chose to nominate Libya as the chair of its sessions which got the U.S. out of joint.

Also, after I left, a few years after that, at the end of the '90s, the U.S., for the very first time since the mission began was not elected to continue service as a member of the Human Rights Commission. Typically, as in a lot of the UN agencies, it's not written but there has been a gentlemen's agreement among the 54 members of the Human Rights Commission that all the permanent members of the Security Council will also be, if you will, permanent members of the Human Rights Commission. After we had the, I think it was after the elections of '94 in the Congress, when we got the Newt Gingrich leadership and the “Contract with America,” when our budget wasn't ready and we were egregiously late in paying our bills to the United Nations, this really did not sit well with a lot of the other members of the United Nations. We just didn't get a lot of good vibes coming out of Washington about our attitude toward the United Nations.

I think when all of the regional groups decide to elect their members - because for the Human Rights Commission, like most other bodies of the UN, the voting takes place within each of the regional groups - our regional group decided it could live without the U.S. as a member of the Commission. I think that lasted for one term. But while I was there we were

on it for the four years and it was a fantastic experience. For a couple of years the head of the U.S. delegation was Geraldine Ferraro, a former representative from New York and former candidate for vice president with Walter Mondale in 1984. She was a pleasure to work with. Then we had another appointment after that as the head of delegation, not such a well known figure. It was a nice combination of working with the people at the mission who worked on human rights. Others had the lead, of course. The head of delegation and then other members who came to support us for that, both members of State Department and members of the public, were selected to serve on the delegation, just as members of the public are often serving on our delegation to the UN General Assembly in New York. So it was an interesting and a new experience to me to be part of a team such as that and working in a very high focused environment as part of a meeting that runs, I think it runs six weeks, if I'm not mistaken. Obviously it required a lot of it preparation .

Well, I had the - I was given the responsibility of having the lead on all the African resolutions, of which there were a fair amount. We were in the ending days of apartheid so there were still some resolutions on South Africa. There were serious resolutions for which we were the sponsor on Sudan, as well as a few other resolutions on Equatorial Guinea. I believe there were others as well. These are the ones I had to take the lead on and to make sure I rounded up the votes.

Q: Well, Rwanda was-

WEINTRAUB: There was a special session on Rwanda, of course, in the summer of '94, when all that was happening. Our ambassador, David Rawson, traveled to Geneva and he came to speak to that special session. Obviously the work of the Security Council and the work of the Human Rights Commission certainly didn't do nearly enough to stop the genocide that occurred in Rwanda. The Human Rights Commission really could do little more than “name and shame,”, as we say, and perhaps appoint a special rapporteur if one was needed to gather evidence about what exactly was happening. Obviously any stronger response would have to come from the Security Council in New York, but we

did, of course, in the summer of '94 have this special session on Rwanda. Typically the regular sessions of the Human Rights Commission were, as I said, in February or March for roughly four or six weeks altogether.

So I met a lot of different people, lot of new people there. We were particularly responsible, as a delegation, for the resolution on Sudan. Each of the country resolutions - as a matter of fact, any resolution - is usually led by one country that's the chief sponsor and then one person in that country's delegation seeks to gather other delegations as co-sponsors and then seek the support of as many other delegations as you can. And as the point person for the U.S. on this draft Sudanese resolution, I had a lot of one-on-one meetings with a delegate who came from Sudan, who came specifically to negotiate or, if you will, to work the resolution. Sudan did not have a great many friends even within the Africa bloc so I can't say it was really difficult to get a strong resolution.

Q: What was happening in Sudan that-

WEINTRAUB: Well basically, it was probably not too different from what's happening in Darfur now, but it was with southern Sudan at the time. It was a civil war, an ongoing civil war, ongoing for over a decade. It was horrible, it was very much a one-sided war where the government had tanks and aircraft, and the rebels in the south were just kind of a guerrilla army. There was a lot of bombing of hospitals, a lot of strafing of civilians, of villages - a lot of the activity that one hears about now in Darfur, the same kind of activities.

To some degree, it differed from Darfur in that it was also a religious conflict. From what I understand, the people in Darfur are Muslims for the most part, like the majority population in Sudan, although they are mainly Bantu or African Muslims compared to Arab Muslims. Well, in the south, there's both an ethnic division, black Africa against Arab Africa, and also people in the south have been heavily influenced by missionary work so there is a strong

element of Christianity in the south as well. So it was kind of an ethnic war, a religious war and obviously a political war as well. And it got to be fairly nasty.

There are a lot of NGOs, some religious, some secular, who are trying to document all these human rights abuses that were taking place, the murders, the rapes. A lot of this was taking place in the Nuba Mountains, an area that achieved a certain degree of notoriety. So, number one, it was not too easy to document all this material, but on the other hand, as I said, it was not like Sudan had a great many friends, even within the Africa region. So if the Africa region didn't support them they weren't going to get much support anywhere else. So basically we were almost in a position of dictating what the resolution was going to be. They could try, possibly, to fool around with it a little bit at the edges, maybe, to soften some language to illustrate maybe one thing where we were not 100 percent sure who was responsible for a particular incident. But the handwriting was on the wall, and they were going to be hard-hitting resolutions. Whether it accomplished much, it's hard to say, but the Human Rights Commission was not a policeman, it's what it is; it's a human rights commission.

I also met a lot of the special rapporteurs - some who went into Sudan; other people did a lot of work on South Africa, Equatorial Guinea, or the special session on Rwanda. So I enjoyed the work on the Human Rights Commission every winter/spring, and also working with all the UN agencies on budget management. I went to a lot of the executive board meetings, a lot of the budget meetings. A lot of them had their annual sessions in the spring, their annual meetings in the spring, such as the World Health Assembly, or the International Labor Conference. So I enjoyed it, meeting such a wide variety of people. And then when these large meetings would take place, either an annual meeting or the executive board meetings, there was always a delegation out from Washington, so it was more opportunity to work as part of a team than you often have in an embassy.

Q: Well now, on the Sudan part of your job, you say you met with the Sudanese delegate quite often. How did this work out?

WEINTRAUB: Well, basically, in the weeks before the Human Rights Commission was due to begin, we in Washington, since the U.S. was the lead sponsor on this resolution, with input from the Africa bureau, the IO bureau, the Human Rights bureau - all the Washington actors or stakeholders and us in Geneva - we crafted a resolution which we felt was hard hitting, accurate and that had a good likelihood of being passed. Then we would share that with a few close friends who we were fairly certain would be a co-sponsor with us, maybe the UK, Germany or Canada. We knew by talking to people on endless opportunities at meetings, receptions, whatever it may be, we kind of knew which other countries were energized to take a strong stand on Sudan, let's say. So you worked this resolution over, you picked up suggestions, you alter some language, change some emphases perhaps, until you have a resolution that now is supported by yourself, your own delegation and the hardcore, the major heavy hitters on the subject.

Then you - I took that resolution to the Sudanese and basically I said we're prepared to put this on the table. Do you have any problems with it? It's kind of hard hitting. Basically it made a lot of accusations about the shortcomings of its government, the failure of its government, and in certain cases the active participation of its government in some atrocities or brutalities, human rights abuses. The ball was now in his court: what did he wish to say? And he'd be taken aback by this, of course, and then we'd have to spend a number of sessions, a number of meeting sessions, working over that resolution. He'd have to send it back to Khartoum, ask them if they would accept this language. I'd have to go back to - I wouldn't necessarily go back to each of the sponsors at this point. I'd go back to my supervisor in Geneva and also a few folks in Washington and find out where we had give and where we did not have give - even if my interlocutor said, well, the government of Khartoum is not going to accept this. And if this was a strong point for us and it was documented and we knew it to be a factual situation, I'd say I'm sorry, that's too bad, we're going to stick with that.

I'm not sure if Sudan was a member of the Human Rights Commission during this period. I think for the four years that I did this, for some of the years they were a member of the Human Rights Commission, for other years they were not. But obviously each of the regional groups had a caucus where they would discuss all the issues on the agenda. And certainly his assignment was of course to develop support for Sudan's position, especially within the African regional caucus. The African regional caucus was, as I would call it, quite protective of many of its human rights abusers. They felt a kind of solidarity. Regrettably, African states featured fairly prominently at that time as not doing very well in the human rights area. We were already past the Pinochet era, we were past the civil wars in Guatemala and El Salvador; we were past the era of Pol Pot.

Q: In Cambodia.

WEINTRAUB: In Cambodia. So a lot of the rough stuff still going on was in Africa. And the Africa group members were getting to be a little sensitive about this. So obviously the Sudanese representative would try to play off that sentiment and try to hit me with a fait accompli. Now we in the U.S. delegation were at the same time talking to other members of the Africa group that we felt were quite reasonable and we said, “Look, it's documented, there's been this report by Amnesty International, this report by Human Rights Watch, this report by a special rapporteur by the United Nations; you know, this is fact, you can't hide it, it's relevant.” So we particularly appealed to those governments in the Africa group which were more democratic, more respectful of human rights, trying to get them to accept the point that you have to expose this, this is the dark underbelly of human rights abuses in the continent and you want to push them to the point where they don't want to protect countries like Sudan. And, obviously, there was a certain amount of tension there because all the African states knew that there was an ethnic basis for this battle as well, the Arab and African as well as the Muslim and Christian experience, so you know, this is where diplomacy and negotiation could come into play.

Q: Well now moving over to your other side, the budget watch, how did you find this? I mean, were any of the agencies you're dealing with prone to inflate their staffing, spending money or something?

WEINTRAUB: Well I guess any large bureaucracy, whether an international organization or domestic agency of a cabinet or anything else tends to put forth a budget before its governing body, before the Congress or any other governing body, that you know it hopes will be able to survive the inevitable decreases or cuts in the budget. And it was our job, of course, to find those and to ax them. I suppose the more technical agencies had an easier time of defending their budget. For example, the World Meteorological Organization, the International Telecommunications Union, these had a lot of technical aspects to them. As a matter of fact, the International Telecommunications Union has industry members that actively participate as delegates. They're not official delegates, and they don't vote on the budget, which is intergovernmental. But because of the nature of the industry - the telecommunications industry, most of the industry in fact is in the private sector - we need government to have a regulatory framework so the satellites can talk to each other and our cell phones and Internet protocols and everything else. Government is there to make sure that the regulations are in place, but since the manufacturing, the distribution networks, the maintenance, the reliability is all subject to the performance of the private sector - they manufacture the chips; they know what can be done - the private sector is there and sits on a lot of meetings. So the ITU has the private sector there which, you know, can protect it, if it will, from the death of 1,000 slices or cuts.

Again, as the other example, the World Meteorological Organization does a lot of technical work with weather monitoring; they've got earth stations all around the globe to measure rain fall, humidity, temperature, etc. Then when you get to organizations like the ILO, the International Labor Organization, there definitely is more of a problem, it gets into the more social engineering issues, if you will: what are the rights of labor, what are fair labor standards? Obviously you're not dealing with technical standards that are likely to be the

same all over the world. A lot of what the West holds to be reasonable working conditions are very different in the Third World. What is the age at which children can begin to work in a factory? Is it exploitation of labor to have 11 year old kids weaving the rugs in Iran and Pakistan if the parents are illiterate and uneducated and need the income to feed their families?

So some areas are definitely more politically sensitive ones, such as labor standards, labor abuse, child labor, or gender equality in the workplace. Agencies working in these areas had a harder time defending some of their proposals from either budget cuts or political decisions. There might be certain countries who, maybe, depended on exports that were fueled by underage labor or prison labor or abused labor, labor that was forbidden to unionize, against ILO principles. Obviously those countries would just as soon do without some studies or do without such new norms for labor protection to be developed. So the ILO typically had a harder time in defending its budget than the more technical or scientifically based agencies.

Q: Did you find that groups within Congress or something would all of a sudden go after a particular agency to cut it?

WEINTRAUB: Well, we always had to be aware of sensitivities within Congress, and we particularly had to be aware when a delegate of some Third World country that was a known human rights abuser, when that delegate, in defense of his own country in a speech, would often point out some problems we had in the United States, either with our treatment of minority groups, our perhaps our treatment of the Indians on reservations. You know, we're such an open society, it's pretty easy to find something — every once in a while there was a case that received high attention in the media. It might concern execution of someone who perhaps was mentally deficient, or execution of a foreigner, a non-citizen of the U.S. in the case where this person's embassy had not been advised of his incarceration. And often when these were appealed the Supreme Court just struck it down and said well, it wouldn't have mattered anyway, there was no new evidence and

we're not here to protect the Vienna Conventiowhich called for such notification to be given when an alien is taken into custody. We're here to administer justice and interpret the Constitution, the Supreme Court would essentially say, and there was no new evidence so it's immaterial to the case.

And considering that, as any ambassador or consular officer knows, this type of activitwhen it happens to urequires some of the highest efforts that the embassy has to put forth when Americans are ever arrested abroad. You better make sure you have access to that American and you need to find out if the American is adequately defended. Obviously we can't interfere in the other country's judicial system and the legal system, but we are required just to make sure that whatever services are available can be tapped by that American citizen and that the American citizen is not discriminated against in any way. And when those principles are ignored in the United States, or when we execute someone who's known to be mentally deficient, all these issues are brought up, raised in the Human Rights Commission: why is the U.S. exempt from examination by this body? So we have to be very carefully how we handle that. Obviously, members of Congress are particularly sensitive about this kind of name calling about the United States.

There were other negative experiences. Some years earlier, before I went to Geneva, under the Reagan administration, we had walked out of the ILO for awhile. We also walked out of another agency, not based in Geneva, but based in Paris, it was UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). Of course there were issues about the agenda. They had plans for a “New World Information Order.” And UNESCwhich was supposed to be concerned about freedom of education, freedom of the press, freedom of information - they had some kind of a scheme under this NWIO where journalists would have to be licensed by the state to make sure they were “authentic” journalists, and government would get involved in licensing journalists. Well, obviously we know that can easily be subject to all kinds of abuses. So that was just a sample. And also we had problems with what they wanted to do with the New World Economic Order, a variety of things definitely linked with the Third World-type agenda. So we walked out

of UNESCO; that was in Paris. But also we walked out of the ILO for awhile. But we were back in the ILO by the time I was there.

Q: Were we back in UNESCO or not?

WEINTRAUB: No, we weren't at that time. I think we've since gone back in UNESCO, but we stayed out for a long time. We did have an observer; we did have someone at the embassy in Paris who could attend meetings as an observer. But obviously we were not paying our dues so we were not a voting member, certainly.

I think the technical, scientific-based agencies had pretty good constituencies back in Washington. For the World Meteorological Organization, our head of delegation was typically a senior person in NOAA, the National Oceans and Atmospheric Administration. For the WIPO, World Intellectual Property Organization, dealing with patents and copyrights, typically we had a senior official from the patent office in the Department of Commerce. For the ITU (International Telecommunications Union), at senior meetings we had senior people from other agencies in the government from the ICC (International Communications Commission), International Communications, whatever it was called, I forget what we have in the United States. Perhaps it's the FCC, Federal Communications Commission.

Anyway, in the more technical agencies we had those people. For the International Labor Organization, we had senior people both from State and from the Department of Labor but Mr. Helms, Senator Helms and others had problems with the ILO. Senator Helms' constituency in the South and others are not known to be particularly supportive of the labor movement, of union movements. But the ILO also had an interesting feature in its representation. It had what's known as tripartite representation. So in addition to the government delegates, at senior levels there were also delegates from the private employers' sector and also from the labor sector. So each senior American delegation to meetings of the ILO had government representation, which was State and Labor

Department, a private sector representation which might be from the manufacturing sector or the trade sector, from management, and union representation as well, and that's built into the way the organization works.

I also did a lot of meetings with the International Committee for the Red Cross, the ICRC, concerning the aftermath of the Gulf War, the first Gulf War. This task was not a part of my original “portfolio,” but it was one of the many things that often occur at embassies or missions that did not fall easily into any particular area. It concerned the issue of missing prisoners from that Gulf War. I think there were about 700 prisoners still unaccounted for. These were members of the allied forces but mainly Kuwaiti, either from the military or from the civilian sector. There were a small number of Saudis, a small number of Syrians (Syria was in the coalition), there may have been an American or two, but most of them were Kuwaitis. After the Gulf War, in one of the Security Council resolutions, the UN Security Council mandated that the ICRC would accept responsibility for a process that might find out about these people — if they were missing, and if they could be repatriated if found. So the ICRC hosted meetings about three times a year, and the meetings typically went on maybe for three or four days. The ICRC was kind of the mediator. On the one side were members of the coalition; the U.S., the UK, France, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Syria attended some of the meetings, but not all of them. And on the other side was Iraq, all by itself. And it was just a very painstaking exercise, - and I regret that I can't say it was a particularly fruitful one. If you get the impression from these meetings that this is what multilateral diplomacy is like, I don't think anyone would ever enter it. The Iraqis were, as far as we could tell, they were stonewalling all the time.

For example, the government of Kuwait, the delegate from Kuwait, would say, well, here's a case. They'd describe an individual and according to all the records this individual was last seen being led away by an Iraqi patrol. He was last seen in the custody of Iraqi soldiers on such and such a date being led away from this particular house. So where is the person now? And these descriptions might go on individually, case by case by case. And the delegation from Iraq, of course, said something like, well, we'll have to take this

under advisement. We take note of all the particulars, we have to report this information to Baghdad, we'll bring this back and see what we can find out. Then at the next meeting they would make a report and half the time it was something like, — well, there was sheer chaos in the bombing that started the war. Our holding areas were destroyed by bombs, there was mass confusion, the people ran away and escaped, we have no way to account for them. Or they'd give some kind of other story. And this would go on back and forth, back and forth.

Q: What was it- in a way, did you feel that this essentially was an exercise in futility, not just by the Iraqi attitude but probably what happened, that they'd been killed?

WEINTRAUB: It could be. I should add, at this point, that at almost all the meetings we were joined by the American ambassador in Kuwait.

Q: Skip Gnehm.

WEINTRAUB: Skip Gnehm. He came for a couple of meetings and then he was replaced by the new American ambassador, Ryan Crocker. And I got the impression from them that the government of Kuwait was on a mission and they were unable to face the public with the potential reality that 700 of their young men were not going to come back. You know, it's a small country, it would be a large percentage of the population. And I got the impression that many of these young men were from elite families in Kuwait. Just as in the United States during and after the Vietnam War, there were families of MIAs that formed a strong lobbying group, a domestic lobbying group in the United States — similarly in Kuwait, there was a committee for the repatriation of the Kuwaiti prisoners. As I understood it, the official line in Kuwait was that these 700 peoplprisoners, if you will — were being held somewhere, and we just had to apply enough pressure on the Iraqis, and we'd find out where they were and they'd be repatriated. And I accepted the viewpoint that Kuwait was a society that had been through such a trauma that they were not prepared to write them off, they were just unwilling to accept as a reality that they might not ever

return. Obviously I was not directly involved with events in Iraq and Kuwait at the time of the occupation and liberation, so I had no way of knowing about specific events, but one could believe certainly that a lot of this happened. Whether a lot of those missing Kuwaitis survived, and whether a lot of them were taken back to Iraq and then executed in cold blood and dumped in a mass grave, we really don't know and certainly didn't know at that time. But that was quite a grueling experience.

I remember when our ambassador from Kuwait Ryan Crocker came to some of these meetings. He was obviously more used to bilateral diplomacy where things are much easier to get done . And the International Red Cross people, God bless them, had patience. The didn't get frustrated, they realized that they're the mediator, they have to keep a civil tongue to everyone, and they just kept at it. And of course while we were there, the International Red Cross lost some people in Rwanda, and other locations as well. I think they also lost some people in Angola when I was there. So I came away with very great respect for the International Red Cross, the ICRC.

Q: How'd you find this living in Geneva, pretty expensive, isn't it?

WEINTRAUB: Yes. Well, I looked at Geneva as kind of a reward for my family after the assignments we'd lived through, mainly in Third World countries. We hadn't been in a European country before. So, yes it was expensive but there was a cost of living allowance. Obviously we had housing allowances and we could live reasonably well. The cost of living allowance, as it did all over the world, took a few months to catch up after the fact, but our kids had a good school at the International School of Geneva — not the best, perhaps, but I think it was a pretty good school. Our middle son did his full four years of high school there; our daughter finished up middle school and started high school. We traveled around a fair amount. Geneva's way in the west of Switzerland, so we were in France a lot, actually we did a lot of skiing in France. I learned to ski in my middle age. We made a few trips to Germany and we made one trip to London.

We made one trip, a very interesting trip, when we drove all the way to Bucharest, Romania. We had a friend who was deputy chief of mission at the time in Bucharest, a friend from a Foreign Service family that we had served with in Nigeria. And, you know, in a Third World post like Nigeria you really develop camaraderie with families. And they had children about the ages of our children as well. So we drove from Switzerland through Germany, the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary and then Romania. And I think it was really an eye opener for our two kids that were with us. Our oldest was in college in the States, but our two high school-aged kids really had a front-row seat to see the differences as you drove east through Europe. Obviously Germany was a lot like Switzerland — for the most part it looked pretty much the same. In the Czech Republic, you could see — this was in '96 — in the Czech Republic things were somewhat run down but humming along alright and of course downtown Prague, where we spent most of our time, was just lovely. And the roads were fairly good. Vienna and Austria were fine, of course. Hungary was another story. The roads suffered by comparison, of course. Budapest was fairly nice, though. You know, this is seven or so years after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the demise of the Soviet Union. Hungary was starting to emerge on its own but the roads, the restaurants were a bit more shabby and second rate.

But as soon as you crossed over the border into Romania it was another world completely. I mean, at the border, the road changed dramatically. There were potholes and street urchins, street beggars all around. It kind of freaked the kids out a little bit when we crossed over. Typically at a border crossings there's always a lot of people milling around, looking to change money, to sell things, to buy things. We had a mini-van which we'd driven all the way, and as soon as we crossed over the border — we had this large vehicle, and I imagine they didn't see a lot of these large vehicles — the little street kids were swarming around the car begging for money for food, whatever. I think it was really an eye opener for our kids. We spent the night on the road on the way to Bucharest and our kids didn't want to go out of the hotel that night. I wanted to walk around, walk around the village square. I was confident it was relatively safe around the village square of the

town, but they were in a kind of a state of anxiety. And then the next day we managed to drive into Bucharest and spend a nice few days with our friends. It was quite an experience, that was.

Again, we made other trips to West Germany. We also went to Denmark one time. We went to the Netherlands. So we traveled by train and we did a lot also by car. We also made a trip to Italy, to Rome. Unfortunately we had a negative incident on the road, actually not too far, kind of near Milan. We stopped on the autostrada, on the highway, at a food court, just like you have on the New Jersey Turnpike. And when we got out after having lunch we found the car had been broken into. Someone had broken the lock on one of the doors and they rifled through the kids' backpacks and the kids had their CD players or Walkmans, whatever it was at the time, so the kids were really devastated by that. Not the monetary value; fortunately we had insurance that was able to cover that. But it was the feeling that you've been violated in your car. So that kind of took that trip down a notch, although we did continue on to see Venice, Florence, and Rome, but I think we shortened the overall length of the trip. Overall, we did a fair amount of traveling, and we did skiing. And I think the kids had a very good time. So I was happy we were able to do that after I'd taken the family through some hardship assignments.

Q: Well, in '97, where?

WEINTRAUB: Well, in '97, our second oldest child, our middle child, finished high school as we were leaving Geneva. And our oldest one, who had been in college in the U.S. he had some academic problems back in the States. He had some learning disabilities that were not diagnosed until Middle School, probably because of our frequent moves. In high school he had a rough time, and he did not complete his college in four years. He went to the University of Maryland, starting in 1993 when we left for Geneva. In fact, he was asked to leave at one point. And he spent a year with us in Geneva. So we had decided, my wife and I, — mainly, my wife but I agreed — that for our second child we wanted to be in Washington when he went to college, not so far away. So we went back home. Our

second child was accepted to college; he went away to college in Ithaca, New York, at Ithaca College.

Upon our return to the U.S. in 1997, I went on assignment to the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, part of the National Defense University. We have the War Collage and ICAF, Industrial College of the Armed Forces. I understand some of the students at the National War College patronizingly referred to ICAF as “Black and Decker U,” since it's more focused on the mobilization aspects of war, if you will, the infrastructure requirements of war, rather than the high policy discussions which, I take it, are more representative of the syllabus at the National War College. But in fact, we do take some classes together, there are some functions together, but we are a little different. So I was part of a class for one year, '97 through '98. Obviously, the majority of the students were in the military, most of them lieutenant colonels and equivalents in the services, Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines and some Coast Guard. About a half-dozen State Department people were in my class, a few people from other civilian agencies, and I think there were a few civilians as well. I think there was a fellow from General Motors who was there. There is no classified material on the syllabus, so they do take people from private enterprise, particularly in ICAF where you're talking about industrial mobilization for war.

Some would say that ICAF is in its glory teaching lessons which will never be used again. I mean, a certain part of the syllabus, of the curriculum, is the mobilization for the Second World War. This includes, you know, the story of “Rosie the Riveter,” and rationing, and victory gardens and scrap metal drives and all those kinds of things required for a war like we had in the Second World War, which was heavily resource intensive. And the population obviously had to make great sacrifices and industry had really to — in some cases, in the case of the automobile industry, to switch entirely, to stop making automobiles for a couple of years and make jeeps and tanks and ships and other things of that nature.

So whether we're ever going to fight a war like that, that will demand that type of mobilization, I really don't know. We've been in this war in Iraq for a couple of years and obviously there are physical constraints. We've heard about the armor on the Humvees and Humvees themselves but it doesn't seem to be - we don't have to build fleets of ships, we don't have to build fleets of aircraft. So whether the syllabus or the curriculum of ICAF needs a major overhaul or not is hard to say. But obviously we do also discuss major policy initiatives. We study some American battles. We — both colleges — take a trip up to Gettysburg, to relive some of the battles of Gettysburg. And we do research papers and study other things as well.

It was quite a valuable experience for me to work with the military as fellow students. I had earlier worked heavily with the military in my IO bureau job from '92 to '93 on Somalia, and I found out a little bit about how the military works. You know, I thought the State Department was a rigid hierarchy. But it was apparent to me that it's nothing compared to the Pentagon. And then you've got both the civilian side and the military side to work with. The military people were, for the most paras I saw it, most of them had a technical background, a lot of them had an engineering background. They might often say something along the lines of, “Just tell me what I've got to do and I'll do it.” Whereas the people in the State Department again, as I saw imight often say something like, “Well, let's look at the problem and decide what we have to do. Maybe in fact we don't need to do that, maybe we need to do something else.” So it was kind of good preparation. I think the preparation was perhaps more valuable for the military than for the civilians.

As we heard in a number of presentations, often by senior military leaders themselves, military officers up until this point, in fact, for the most part were being told what to do: “I want you to take this hill, I want you to do this, I want you to do that.” And your job as an officer was to figure out the best way to do it: what kind of people do you need, what kind of resources do you need, how long a time do you need to do it, etcetera, etcetera. Now they were being prepared, some would become full colonels and some would get stars on

their shoulders as generals. And then they were going to have to decide, in fact, do we need to do that, do we need to do something else, do we need allies — you know, getting more into the policy level of issues, which we in State kind of dealt with all of our careers, with much more ambiguity. But I think it was a very good experience all around. I think both the civilians and the military benefited a lot from that. So that was the year '97 to '98.

Q: Then what?

WEINTRAUB: Then, again, it seems every new job I have is completely different than anything else I've ever had. I went into the Bureau of European Affairs as the coordinator for the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The OSCE is the most inclusive Euro-Atlantic organization. It has virtually all European countries in it; Russia, all the states of the former Soviet Union, the Vatican, Lichtenstein — I mean all the micro states as well as the United States and Canada. You know, it started out as kind of a balance between the East and the West, the Helsinki Agreement signed by Gerald Ford and Leonid Brezhnev. We in the west pushed for action on human rights, while they on the Soviet side pushed for inviolability of borders, and we both kind of got what we wanted. It was an agreement that started out as a conference on security and cooperation, the CSCE, and years later it became a full-fledged international organization, the OSCE. So the office was housed in the, basically the European Office of Regional Political and Military Affairs. The European Union was in an office of economic affairs, Regional Economic Affairs, within the European Bureau,. Obviously the EU is becoming much more of a political animal as well, but as we all know it started out as a coal and steel community, then as a European common market, but now obviously it has a more political agenda as well. But the OSCE was basically in the same office that handled NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO did the hard security, if you will; we did the soft security.

Again, like in the summer of '92, when I walked into the IO bureau, and I ran straight into events unfolding in Somalia, which later would become all consuming, in the summer of

1998, when I walked into the OSCE office, without a great deal of European background, I walked into what would become the events in Kosovo, in the former Yugoslavia. We had already had the Dayton Agreement so most of the fighting-

Q: That is the war in Bosnia.

WEINTRAUB: Bosnia and Croatia, Slovenia, the Serbs — you know, most of that had been solved or resolved to a point. But now what we were talking about, this was within the constituent Federal Republic of Serbia, specifically the Province of Kosovo. And this was starting to heat up just as I came in around August of '98. It was within the province of Kosovo, where a majority of the population was of Albanian ethnic identification. I'm not sure precisely how ethnically different they are from the Serbs but I guess they see themselves as separate, both groups do. The people that are known as the Kosovars are predominantly Muslim, they speak a different language from other Serbs, they speak Albanian as far as I can tell, and maybe they are ethnically different but I'm not sure.

Q: They do appear to be.

WEINTRAUB: Do they? Okay. The Serbs, of course, are Slavic, Eastern European, they speak Serbian and generally belong to the Orthodox church, the Serbian Orthodox church. There's a history of bad blood between these two groups. I guess the Serbs remember with infamy a defeat they had, a defeat that the-

Q: 1389.

WEINTRAUB: Yes.

Q: I spent five years in Belgrade.

WEINTRAUB: Yes. - that the Serbs suffered at the hands of the Turks.

Q: The Battles of Kosovo, yes.

WEINTRAUB: Yes. So Kosovo has a high resonance within Serbia and the fact that the province had now become majority Kosovar Albanian really rankled many Serbs. There were a lot of allegations of human rights abuses by the Serb authorities, by the police forces against the Kosovars. There was the start of the Kosovo Liberation Army, an underground movement which was starting to inflict some casualties on the Serb forces and things were not looking good at all.

Well, we called in once again Ambassador Richard Holbrooke who had knocked heads together to get the Dayton Agreement in the mid-'90s, and he made some trips to Belgrade. And finally Holbrooke and the Serb leader Milosevic hammered out an agreement whereby the OSCE would play a major monitoring role. So in the fall of '98 when I was fairly new on the job we, the OSCE, was called upon to start a KVM, Kosovo Verification Mission, with Ambassador Bill Walker as head of it. There was an agreement where the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission would monitor behavior on the ground, activities on the ground in Kosovo. The Serbian authorities, the police forces, paramilitary forces, other security forces were supposed to pull back to certain areas and then NATO was going to overfly to verify through imagery that forces were being pulled back. So there were a lot of very long days setting up the Kosovo Verification Mission; like many of these things, once a paper's signed everybody wants like 100 people out there in a week.

Fortunately, at this time, the Norwegians were assuming leadership of the OSCE. The OSCE is headed by an annually chosen “Chair in Office,” as it's called, a CIO, selected from among the members. There is a secretary general of the organization, but the secretary general is primarily an administrative head. The political leadership, or CIO, is by a rotating chairman in office and we were fortunate to have the Norwegians doing this at this time. So they, with our support, they dedicated a lot of resources, a lot of time, to set up this Kosovo Verification Mission. And I don't think we could have wished for a better job than they did. They installed a lot of communications facilities, a lot of physical facilities to

set up a verification mission in Pristina, the major city of Kosovo Province and other areas around it as well.

Well, Ambassador Walker could probably tell you much more about this than I can but there continued to be serious incidents throughout the fall and the winter of '98-'99. Things were not getting better. Slobodan Milosevic was kind of an obstinate guy, a cantankerous guy, and the Kosovo Liberation Army didn't make things any easier. Obviously their aim was independence or merger with Albania, either of which would be unacceptable to Serbia. So under Madeleine Albright's leadership we had another international meeting in Rambouillet, in France, where the Serbs, the Kosovars and major powers in the region all came together to see what could happen once again.

Now, I think what happened is that the outside powers wanted to put a stop to this so we put a proposal on the table: certain Serbian forces would pull back, the Kosovars would do other things; there'd be respect for human rights, etcetera, etcetera. At first point, neither side accepted it; neither the Kosovars nor the Serbs accepted it. I think this was in February. The common wisdom at the time then and afterward was that our side, the U.S. and others, leaned on the Kosovars to accept this. It didn't grant them autonomy, it didn't grant them independence. But we thought it was the best that could be available at the time. And I think we kind of leaned on them to accept it. Eventually they did, but the Serbs did not accept it and the conference ended without an agreement. And in the meanwhile the tensions between the two groups within the province are building and building. And then it was in March, I believe, that the bombing campaign by NATO began. Proposals to take stronger action by the UN went back and forth in the Security Council. Obviously we were quite certain that the Russians and the Chinese would both veto any call for action in the Security Council.

In addition to what was happening in Serbia and in Kosovo, there was an outflow of refugees from there, unsettling the region, particularly in Italy, which was the next country over after the former Yugoslavia. There were a lot of refugees coming into Italy and into

Austria. And the decision was taken, in NATO, to bomb Serbian positions and bomb Belgrade as well.

Q: There was considerable human rights- essentially ethnic killing was-

WEINTRAUB: This was the term that started in the former Yugoslavia, “ethnic cleansing.” There were, you know, very serious reports of atrocities.

Q: Yes.

WEINTRAUB: Very serious reports. And it was the kind of situation where years later — how do you look at yourself in the mirror if you think there's something you can do about it and you don't? And this, of course, is five years after the massacres in Rwanda and, you know, people said the reason we didn't go into Rwanda is because memories of what went wrong in Somalia the year before, what happened there, in the “Blackhawk Down” incident. Now people might say, well, maybe the reason we did go into Kosovo is we're ashamed of what we did not do in Rwanda. These things have a cumulative effect.

So the bombing began in March of '99. I think there was a supposition it wasn't going to last too long. I think it lasted about six weeks. And we had that political incident where in error we bombed the embassy of China in Belgrade, very embarrassing, of course, and also there were significant losses of life and losses of property as well.

So the bombing campaign did last, I think as I said, about six weeks. It did generate a certain amount of opposition. I think Secretary General Annan went on the record as not accepting it as a legitimate use of force, since it was not sanctioned or approved by the Security Council. I think that still rankled certain people who thought if ever there was a case where outside intervention was needed, just as it was in Rwanda, this was another one. But eventually we reached a situation where the Serbs sued for surrender and then we started working on a way to administer Kosovo. I think — although the language is not out there in specific terms — essentially the province of Kosovo is like a UN protectorate. It

really has been, I believe, for several years after the bombing essentially run by the United Nations with other organizations as well, each doing certain jobs; the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) has certain responsibilities there, the European Union has certain responsibilities, the United Nations has certain responsibilities. So it's a somewhat unwieldy situation, and I think it remains so to this day. The majority of Kosovars probably would prefer, I think, number one independence, and number two integration with Albania. Obviously, Serbia would like neither of those outcomes. And it's now coming on six years after that campaign. I haven't followed it closely, but I don't recall seeing anything showing signs of a resolution of that situation.

Q: Well right now I'm interviewing Larry Rosen.

WEINTRAUB: Oh yes.

Q: Larry is out there, and we haven't come to that point yet but he's out there as an ambassador, I think, I'm not sure if he's working for the states or whether- the U.S. or whether he's working for the OSCE or what because he's retired but he's out there.

WEINTRAUB: Right. He was in the European Affairs Bureau as — I think — as the head of the Office of South Central Europe at the time, so we worked a lot with that office, of course.

Q: Well, during this time, what were you doing?

WEINTRAUB: Well, we were trying to make sure the OSCE had the support it needed and it did the job it needed to do. Basically, we interacted with our mission in Vienna to the OSCE; our ambassador was David Johnson, who I think is now DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) in London, to pull together — we had work with other OSCE members, and particularly with the Norwegian CIO, to pull together a Kosovo Verification Mission in very short order. And like in any multi-lateral organization people often, when time comes to take action and allocate resources, people often look to the United States to follow

our lead. So we had to make sure we knew what we wanted. So again, I worked a lot in tandem with our office right next door that worked with NATO, particularly during the bombing phase, and even before and after; we had to make sure our military track and the civilian track worked together. So there was a lot of time putting together the Kosovo Verification Mission, looking for people to staff it up, to be verification monitors of what was going on. Then when the bombing stopped, we had to make sure the OSCE was as active as possible in getting all the support people out there. So we were either working very closely with the Norwegians or the next Chairman in OfficI forget who it was, it may have been the Dutch, I'm not sure. There was, in any case, a lot of organizing to do to get the people out there, to first do the verification mission and then — post-war — to help the major reconstruction efforts.

Q: Well, for the verification procedure, a cadre had been developed in Bosnia of election monitors run by the OSCE.

WEINTRAUB: Right, right.

Q: And, I did this for two times, you know, as an old Serbian hand. But there was a large number of retired Foreign Service officers brought into that. I know at least one, Harry Dunlap.

WEINTRAUB: That name sounds familiar. We had some of these people but of course, you know, the election monitoring period for OSCE monitors is usually only a week or two. But these requirements were for longer periods, these people would be there maybe for three or four months and under more difficult conditions, as there was a certain amount of tension in the countryside. So I had to try to staff up that monitoring function at the same time as we were staffing election monitors for elsewhere in Europe, particularly in the new emerging democracies in the post-Soviet countries . We needed to — that was another one of my responsibilities with a staffer in my office — to try to recruit a certain number of U.S. election observers to take part.

Q: Well, you mentioned that we were concerned that China and Russia would veto. What happened with them?

WEINTRAUB: Well, obviously they were not in agreement with our policy to act through NATO rather than through the United Nations. The Russians obviously were not part of the decision to start the bombing, certainly. But once it was over and we put our troops on the ground the Russians wanted to be there, and they were there. It was similar to the post-war occupation of Germany where we had U.S., British, French, and Russian zones. As far as I can recall, I think we had similar zones in Kosovo. I don't think they were as rigid and not as

Q: No, there were areas-

WEINTRAUB: There were certain areas. I believe there was - at one point, Ambassador Walker may remember better than I would or others might, there was a bit of tension when the Russians arrived earlier than we expected them to.

Q: The Russians pulled a brigade or something out of Bosnia and did an end run and headed for Pristina.

WEINTRAUB: Yes, I think they got to the airport.

Q: Where their people in Moscow were saying oh no, we're not doing that. And they were, you know. And there was, in fact, a little bit of concern that, was this a rogue element. I mean, was the military, was the Russian military running things and putting stuff in. As it turned out, the British happened to be in Pristina when they arrived and they just let them sit and they eventually- And we also stopped attempts by the Russians to supply this group by air, we wouldn't-

WEINTRAUB: Right, right.

Q: They couldn't get over flights. And they just sort of, I won't say withered on the vine but they had to depend on the kindness of the French, the British and the Americans.

WEINTRAUB: Right, right. So that supply situation finally ended. Yes, I remember for a period of maybe 48 hours or maybe 72 hours, there was a little bit of an element of angst there about what this Russian advance element was doing. As you said, we couldn't get clarification from Moscow of just who had ordered them there. But once we got over that action, things kind of settled down and I just don't know what the status of Kosovo is now, but as far as I can tell, it's still unresolved, still for the most part under a United Nations mandate.

Q: Yes and no give on either side.

WEINTRAUB: No, by neither the Serbians nor the Kosovars.

Q: Well, what, how did you find the OSCE as an instrument?

WEINTRAUB: Well, it certainly has been derided as a talk shop. It does not have the range of active elements of the United Nations, which can also be a talk shop. But the United Nations has, you know, a high commission for refugees, a development program; it has a lot of other active elements as well. The OSCE, for its active elements, has fielded missions in certain of the countries and again, if you look at the map of Europe, it's in the former Soviet states or former members of the Warsaw pact where in fact we - there are the most concerns about the development of democracy.

So for example, there was a mission in Estonia because we had — we wanted to make sure the Russians would fully withdraw as they had agreed to and, at the same time, from the point of view of democracy and human rights, we were concerned about the treatment of ethnic Russians in all the Baltic States. I mean, these are people really in a bind. In the Stalinist period they were shipped in there to flood the Baltic States with ethnic Russians to make sure they'd be subservient to Mother Russia; the Soviet Union did its

best to fully absorb those countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, although obviously no other states recognized that. Then when they finally did regain their independence, obviously these new governments in the Baltic States did not have a great feeling for the ethnic Russians who were seen as representatives of the state that controlled them for so long. But yet most of these people were sent there unwillingly. Yet they were there, often they were second or third generation families there — typically the older people never learned to speak the local language, they didn't see a need to. The children might have gone to local schools, but they were a hard group to integrate. And we wanted to make sure that the three Baltic republics did a reasonable job of fostering integration — as far as instruction of the local language, making these people eligible to vote if they didn't go back to Russia and they wanted to stay, establishing a procedure by which they could acquire citizenship without unduly harsh procedures.

So we had OSCE missions there to, on the one hand, monitor the Russian withdrawal but on the other hand to see that these new governments would treat their Russian ethnic population as best as we could hope for. In other countries like Ukraine and Belarus, we had OSCE missions there just to keep a watch on the state of freedom of speech and freedom of the political process. We always, of course, sent OSCE-sponsored election observers there whenever there were elections. And as well as in Central Asia, the five Central Asian republics also. There was a feeling that these — all these countries could very easily backslide into or, in fact, never emerge from the totalitarian style of rule which had been present there ever since they were a part of the Soviet Union. I think in all the Central Asian states the initial rulers, the people initially elected as president, wore the party hacks that were in control under rule of Moscow. They just now suddenly became nationalists, and they won the election, but it was pretty much a top down rule by a ruling party, not called the communist party but pretty much a ruling party.

So we had missions in most of these countries and we tried to encourage fledgling NGOs, fledgling civil rights groups, private associations, businesses, civil society groups, the bar, labor unions. These groups were sponsored to do the same kind of things we had

typically done in Eastern Europe before, supporting a movement that might become a “Solidarity” movement like they did in Poland, for example. So there were a lot of activities going on. We had to staff these missions, obviously not exclusively with Americans but we wanted to get Americans in where we thought they had a good opportunity. But there was obviously a wealth of talent throughout Eastern Europe. I took a fair number of trips to Vienna to attend various senior level meetings of the OSCE. Typically there were senior level meetings each November, occasionally at the summit level, occasionally at the ministerial level. There was a meeting in November '98 in Oslo, there was a ministerial meeting, but we couldn't get Warren Christopher- was it Warren Christopher, was he still there?

Q: It would be Madeleine Albright.

WEINTRAUB: Madeleine Albright, of course, right. But Ambassador Pickering went to that one as undersecretary. Strobe Talbot, the deputy secretary, didn't go either. So Pickering went to that one in Oslo. Then the next year in November '99, it was agreed to be a summit meeting and it was in Istanbul. And President Clinton did go to that one. I think at the earlier summit he was not too impressed with what went on. I think he had a little bit of a problem with Boris Yeltsin at that earlier summit, '94 or '95, I forget when it was. But I think the idea of going to Istanbul intrigued him so that was our trump card to get the president to go.

I remember one thing that was very interesting about preparations for that OSCE summit in 1999, There was concern in the department that the human rights community would make a fuss about why were we holding it in Istanbul. Why did we give this honor to Turkey? After all, the Turkish government had a reputation for treating the Kurds terribly. I'm not sure if the PKK leader Mr. Ocalan was arrested or not by then, I can't remember. But obviously there were issues in Turkey about the Kurds that went on for decades. And the assistant secretary for European affairs at the time was Mark Grossman and I remember the Helsinki committee on the Hill was having a hearing about the upcoming

summit. I think this was at the time when it was not quite yet “set in stone” that it would be in Istanbul. So we all prepped, particularly obviously the Turkey desk officers, prepped Assistant Secretary Grossman for his hearing on the Hill. I went up there with him because I just was interested in seeing this hearing. Well, I could not have been more surprised. It shows you never know in politics what's going to happen.

The first senator to speak was Senator of, I think he's from Colorado, Senator Ben Nighthorse- Campbell, of American Indian extraction, I believe. And we're all coming up there, we're going up there and I was kind of psyched for us to be lambasted for Turkish behavior. And the senator starts off, and he reminisces about his time in the military in Korea. You know, we're talking about 45 years ago in Korea. And by God, he loves the Turks.

Q: Well the Turks put on the best show. The Turks are very proud of this because they did a damned good- they were tough troops.

WEINTRAUB: Yes. And he was there and by God, he thought the Turks were the best allies we had in the bunch and he remembers what a great job they did, and you know, he was all for holding the summit in Istanbul. So this was a nice opener and just goes to show, people have long memories and we were so focused on the immediate problem. Now obviously, we had some other expressions of concern by other members that Mr. Grossman was able to handle quite well, but that was an eye opener. You know, you think you have it all covered and you just never know where someone is going to come from.

So obviously preparing for the summit, that was another interesting experience. Here this was going to be a summit of the OSCE, and I was the coordinator for the OSCE in Washington. So I assumed this was my “show,” you know. I was pretty na#ve. When you get a summit, especially a multilateral one with scores of heads of state, the formal agenda is about the least of your concerns, that's just an excuse for everybody to get there. I mean, there were very many activities going on that had nothing at all to do with

the OSCE — eight pay grades above me, so to speak. For example, President Clinton signed a pipeline agreement to get oil out of Kazakhstan to avoid having it go through Iran. There were many bilateral meetings going on of one kind or another. From my perspective the OSCE agenda kind of got smothered by many other higher priority issues. When the president travels, you know, all the stops are out. But, I learned my place, I learned my place in a hurry. It was a very, very good experience.

I mean, I had the lead responsibility- I didn't have the final say on it, but I had the lead responsibility for drafting the preparatory memoranda and briefing papers both for the secretary and for the president and for the White House. Now obviously the package would be massaged by various staffers, not to mention our deputy assistant secretary and assistant secretary and deputy secretary, etcetera, etcetera but it was quite a responsibility to be in charge of putting all the things together. You can imagine the “tasker” you get from “S/S” when it's for a presidential meeting — you know, it's just enormous. But it was obviously a very valuable experience. We put in, myself and the other people in the office, put in enormously long hours in the weeks leading up to the summit. We survived; the summit went well.

I managed to parlay the trip into something else, I think the summit was the Thursday and Friday before Thanksgiving, so my wife and I made some plans to include our daughter, who was the only one of our three children still living at home. She was in high school at the time, and my wife and daughter flew out on Friday and met me in Istanbul on Saturday morning just after the summit. And then we spent a few days together — this was my first time to Istanbul, and my family had not been there before either. So I had the weekend, and then we stayed a few days in Istanbul with my wife and my daughter; my other kids were either working or in college and couldn't come. So that was a very nice opportunity. I hadn't been in that part of the world before. Well, I guess when we were in Israel we had taken a cruise along the Greek Islands and we had briefly visited the ancient city of Ephesus in Turkey, but we'd never been to Istanbul before.

So I found the experience quite an exciting one of being in a new area. I hadn't been involved in Europe before, hadn't been involved in major issues between the U.S. and Russia, disarmament, and security issues. This included, of course, the whole issue of where is NATO's proper sphere of operations. And the earlier bombing of Serbia unleashed a whole new concept. Up until that time the sense was that NATO would not operate east of the former East-West dividing line in Europe. But now that “sense” was no longer operative, and now obviously we see NATO as far away as in Afghanistan. But there were a lot of policy memoranda and recommendations, a lot of debates going on concerning where is the proper sphere of NATO's action - where does it end? NATO, of course, has a founding mission to protect all the alliance member countries, but we took action in Serbia because the activities in Kosovo were upsetting the area and were a threat to the peace and security of the alliance countries. Serbia is not an alliance country, but what Serbia's doing is affecting our security. Therefore we're into Serbia. But you know, how far does it go? But obviously we see now it goes very far. So it was an exciting period and of course we were working with a deputy secretary — we worked a lot with Strobe Talbott, since he was a Russian specialist.

Q: Yes, this was his-

WEINTRAUB: His forte.

Q: Yes, he'd been in Moscow-

WEINTRAUB: I think for Time magazine.

Q: Time magazine I think and he took on the task of dealing with what was known as the newly independent states.

WEINTRAUB: Right, right, the so-called NIS. And my deputy assistant secretary, Ronald Asmus, I think was brought in by Strobe Talbott as someone who was a specialist in NATO. I think he wrote a doctorate on NATO affairs. So he did both, Asmus did the

regional organizations, both NATO and OSCE. So we had very good policy supervision, policy management. It was an exciting, very busy couple of years.

Q: Well then, this would be in 2000, wouldn't it?

WEINTRAUB: I was there in the OSCE Affairs office from '98 to 2000.

Q: And then what?

WEINTRAUB: And I guess maybe we'll end it now at 3:30.

Q: And the next time?

WEINTRAUB: In the year 2000 I went back to my roots, if you will, and went to AF/W as a deputy director.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then. Great.

Today is the 12th of September, 2005. And we're at the year 2000 and you're off to AF/W.

WEINTRAUB: Correct.

Q: What did West Africa consist of?

WEINTRAUB: Well, basically it includes the countries from the west coast on the Atlantic starting from the country of Mauritania through Senegal and further along the coast, then Mali all the way through that sweep of West Africa up to Niger and Nigeria. Above it is North Africa which is part of the NEA Bureau, the Near East Bureau, and then east of it, Chad and Cameroon are considered part of Central Africa (AF/C) for our internal geographical purposes.

Q: Well, you were in AF/W from when to when?

WEINTRAUB: Well, earlier I first had served at the embassy in Lagos from 1982 to 1984. Then I had been a country desk officer for Nigeria from '90 to '92 so now this was a little bit of a homecoming eight years later to come back as the deputy office director.

Q: Who was the assistant secretary for African affairs when you got there?

WEINTRAUB: When I got there it was kind of near the end of the Clinton, second Clinton administration. The assistant secretary at that time was Susan Rice, and she was replaced after the next presidential election in 2000 by Walter Kansteiner.

Q: Alright. Well, in the first place, how did you find the African bureau? Had it changed? New administration coming in, was there much impact there or not?

WEINTRAUB: Well no, I don't think so. I think, to be quite frank, the way I would interpret it, most of the issues in the Africa bureau, particularly in AF/W and AF/C as well, I think there are few issues that rise to the attention of the secretary, much less the White House. So I think for the most part the African specialists, and that includes a political appointee if there is one as the assistant secretary of African affairs, can fairly much chart the course as they see fit, as long as obviously it stays within well defined parameters established by the president and the secretary. But there's just — I think it's just so rare that any issues in the region do rise to the highest levels that — so I think as a matter of fact I don't think I saw that much difference in AF/W, how Nigeria was handled in the year 2000 as it was when I was a desk officer eight years earlier. That country is always the 800 pound gorilla in the region, so to speak. It's got the population, it's got the land, it's got the petroleum wealth, and it far outweighs the influence of any of the countries or most of the countries in the region put together, as a matter of fact. So that was unchanged also.

Q: How long were you there?

WEINTRAUB: I was there for two years.

Q: Two years.

WEINTRAUB: It was a two year Washington tour.

Q: What- well, let's talk about Nigeria first. What was the situation there and what were our concerns?

WEINTRAUB: Well, since the time I had served as a desk officer and again more recently, Nigeria had once again made a transition from military rule to civilian rule. The Babangida government was in power when I was there as a desk officer but now it was following the elections of '99, and the current leader of Nigeria was, and still is, President Obasanjo. He had been recently elected, so Nigeria was then as now under a democratically elected government. If anything, though, corruption and the scams had gotten worse, the allegations of drug smuggling had gotten worse. At the same time, we were heavily involved with Nigeria and other members of the regional or I should say the sub-regional organization known as ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, E-C-O-W-A-S.

We were very eager for the Nigerian military, with others in ECOWAS, to play a stabilizing role in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Liberian civil war had somehow ground itself down, ground itself to a halt. The country was not stable by any means, but for the most part there was a government headed by Mr. Taylor, following a contested election-

Q: This is Charles Taylor.

WEINTRAUB: Right. This is Charles Taylor. We had serious problems with the elections, but he was the president. At the same time, now there was a new undercurrent of rebels advancing in the country and Sierra Leone was in awful shape, terrible shape. The so-called RUF, R-U-F, Revolutionary United Front — these were the people who had a reputation for hacking off the arms, limbs, legs, feet of children, of opponents in Sierra Leone, many of the fighters being so-called “child soldiers,” probably under the influence of

drugs. Who knows what they were involved in in order to get their resources to purchase arms, whether it was smuggling of drugs, or smuggling of diamonds, but Sierra Leone was in awful shape, terrible shape; Liberia was not much better. There was a government in place in Sierra Leone, but under challenge by a revolutionary movement and we were trying to get the Ghanaians, the Nigerians, Senegalese, perhaps Malians, to get their troops trained to serve under a peacekeeping force in the region. So we were very heavily involved in a military way.

As a result, in AF/W, we had something we had not had earlier, something I didn't remember from when I was a desk officer. We had a military adviser in the bureau, a U.S. military officer assigned to State Department as a liaison because we had a lot of military training programs, military “supply and equip” or “train and equip” programs in a number of countries in the region. So we were heavily involved with Nigeria. We were building training facilities in Nigeria, not bases for our military personnel, but for Nigerian and perhaps other ECOWAS forces. Most of the training was done by contractors, which typically meant the use of retired officers out of the military for a few years. This was a big effort; we were spending a lot of money, and it was subject to all the typical hassles of working with the Nigerians in that region — making sure our supplies were getting out of customs, that the subcontractors in Nigeria were performing the work up to specs, that the land to be used for training facilities had been appropriately acquired from village authorities or tribal governments or local governments. And as I probably mentioned earlier, things in Nigeria are never easy. There's always a suspicion someone's always taking you. There's always a suspicion that there's a lot of money moving around in ways that we didn't want it to be moving. It's hard to put your finger on these thoughts or suspicions, but given that environment it's tough.

Q: Well were you seeing, I mean, Nigeria did have this oil wealth that was coming.

WEINTRAUB: And it still does.

Q: Did you see much affect on the infrastructure for the people of Nigeria?

WEINTRAUB: Surprisingly much less than one would have thought. The conventional wisdom about Nigeria — the corruption, and the public works that should have been done with all the petroleum wealth — the conventional wisdom about Nigeria often compared it to another country in similar conditions, Indonesia, also a member of OPEC, another major oil producer. Indonesia is also very heavily populated and also pretty much regarded as rife with corruption. And I had heard from some people that the major difference was that in Indonesia, due to a variety of corrupt practices, prices were maybe inflated by 50 or 60 percent on all public work projects for bridges and roads and public communications facilities; the price was inflated but the work got done. It got done but it got done in a corrupt manner at absurd prices and a lot of people skimmed off the top. In Nigeria, by contrast, the prices were similarly inflated but the work just never got done. Projects were started, the contractors were advanced the money, maybe they worked for a month or two and then suddenly you couldn't find them anymore. And this was typically the story of how I saw a lot of the petroleum wealth evaporating; either that or just going out of the country. When I had been an officer at the embassy in Lagos in the middle '80s and there was a coup, for the first eight months or so after the coup the biggest thing was to find all the money in the Swiss and the London bank accounts that the previous politicians had smuggled away there. So one did not hear a great many success stories about Lagos finally having a good road system, or a drinking water system, or a sewer system, or electrical grid, or whatever it was. The stories just went on and on much as they have gone on before.

Q: Well had they moved the capital yet?

WEINTRAUB: Yes, shortly before I came to AF/W, the capital — this was a very long-term project — finally had moved from Lagos on the coast, the original colonial capital, to Abuja, roughly in the central location of the country. The Nigerians had built a new and “artificial” capital much as a Brasilia was built, and much as Washington, D.C., in fact, was originally

built. But even as an embassy officer in Lagos in the middle '80s, this already was a plan underway, but it had taken 15 years, perhaps, until it came to fruition. The embassy where I had served had become the consulate in Lagos. It was still a large installation, still a large facility, because in fact the greatest share of the commercial life of the country was still there. As for Abuja, at first the embassy sent people up for long weekends and then gradually more and more people stayed for longer periods of time. It took a while for schools to be built. It took a while for housing to be built. But, yes, at this time Abuja was becoming a capital in fact as well as in name.

Q: Was there any move to almost say the corruption is so bad in Nigeria on these projects that we're going almost to write it off and say what's the point?

WEINTRAUB: Well, one important thing to recall is that Nigeria had the manpower, had the military strength, and they had earlier helped out at the height of the Liberian civil war. At the same time, however, their troops also left that country a little bit under a cloud, amidst allegations of stealing everything that wasn't nailed down, of abusing people in Liberia when they came as peacekeepers in that country's civil war. So everybody was aware this was the bargain you got. But the Nigerians, a country of over 100 million people — there's no doubt about it — had the numbers of troops that were required. They certainly were not the most disciplined of military forces, not the best trained, not the best equipped — so when we sent them into Sierra Leone, we had to equip and train these people. When combined with others from Ghana, from Senegal, this was the force that was used, although at a certain time the British eventually sent their own force into Sierra Leone when we were there.

There had been various incidents of UN peacekeepers being kidnapped and held by the rebels and at one point some of those abducted were British and the British figured they'd had enough of this. So they sent their own troops into Sierra Leone, not under a UN mandate, not under an OAU mandate, not under an ECOWAS mandate, but their own troops under orders from London, and they got their fellows out. But they had a restricted

kind of mandate, of course, and they were not to engage in broader peacekeeping efforts. But yes, there was- everybody knew what the Nigerians were, what the situation was like — but, you know, these were the resources that we had available. Obviously there was never any consideration of the U.S. sending in our own troops. As it is after much pleading and cajoling with the Pentagon, I think we were able to get I don't think any more than a half dozen, active duty troops in as advisors in the Sierra Leone ministry of defense, helping them to put together some improved planning and operational procedures. But we weren't going to put in the kind of manpower that was really needed, and nobody else was either. I don't think the Nigerians were overly eager to do it either, but they recognized that the instability was only going to get worse in the region. They assumed a certain amount of responsibility, but they also had no doubt that it was to handled by the U.S. in terms of a financial assistance package that would include training and other material that we handed out. In those terms, things worked out well for them. But it was always a challenge, always a challenge to work with the Nigerians.

Q: But now, when you were there, how were, well in the first place, in peacekeeping troops, how about the Ghanaian troops and the troops from Ghana and from Senegal, because I think of those two as having quite respectable military.

WEINTRAUB: Yes, I believe they were somewhat better prepared than the Nigerians, more disciplined and more trained, but still we had to equip them, and from what I understand they performed somewhat better on the job. But they were considerably smaller in quantity than the Nigerians and it was always nice to hear, always nice to hear that some of the ECOWAS troop contingents were doing well. As a matter of fact, I'm just reading a book that Canadian General Romeo Dallaire wrote about his experience as head of the UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda in 1994 and he had very high regard for Ghanaian peacekeeping troops that were there. His book kind of slams some of the others — I think the Bangladeshis don't come out too well, but he had high regard for the Ghanaian troops in Rwanda. So I think that, yes, I think that they did well. I know in setting up the training program for West African troops, which we had also set up in

Senegal, in Mali, and in Niger, the Nigerians always had more problems: Which was the land to be used for the training facility? What was the United States going to do and pay for? What was the Nigerian contribution going to be? You know, there was always debate on what was the U.S. going to provide and what was the local government going to provide. And these negotiations started as force agreements, negotiations on what the host government would provide, and they were always much more involved and protracted with the Nigerians. I remember the negotiations with the Senegalese and the Ghanaians were always wrapped up earlier than the ones with the Nigerians.

Q: How did we view the president of Nigeria at the time you were there?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I guess there were two schools of thought. One was that- (end side one, tape seven)

One view was that he was no different than any other. He said the right words but he lived off corruption as much as anyone else. And the other view saw him, in fact, as someone who — given serious constraints on how much he could do — nevertheless was sincerely a committed individual who wanted to bring about democratization and clean government to Nigeria, at least by Nigerian standards. This was the man who had earlier assumed the power of military leader of Nigeria in the '70s after one of the other military leaders was assassinated, Murtala Mohammad. And in the late '70s he voluntarily stepped down. I mean, this was after Nigeria had had a military government for over a decade. In the late '70s he voluntarily stepped down, and there was an election in '79. He retired to his farm in order to be a chicken farmer. And said okay, I'm out of politics now. This was something practically unheard of anywhere in the third world where there had been a military coup.

Well, that second republic lasted from 1979 to 1983. Another military government took over on December 31, 1983, following elections in August that year that were heavily criticized for being unfair if not downright fraudulent. That military regime, in one form or another, lasted to the late 1990s. Its various leaderboth the military leaders themselves

and the former elected officials who worked with them during that period — were seen by many as so tainted by allegations of corruption that nobody could trust them or wanted to trust them. Obasanjo, by contrast, during his time out of office, the '80s and '90s, had gathered a reputation as somewhat of an elder statesman, one of the few African leaders who stepped down — even though he in fact had been a military leader, nevertheless he stepped down voluntarily. So he had gathered about himself an aura of the elder statesman. He had served on a number of committees for the United Nations, been an envoy or two for the secretary general of the United Nations. He had been invited to attend meetings with Jimmy Carter, and other NGOs. He had a persona as one of the wise men of the continent and the elder statesman, as I said. So he had a nice, kind of a clean reputation going into those elections in 1999. So I kind saw him as operating in a tough environment but he himself wanted to do the right thing; given the environment of Nigeria he was the best of the lot, he was the best that we could hope for the future of Nigeria.

Q: Well we had had two running sores in your part of the world. You mentioned before, Liberia and Sierra Leone. What was your involvement, what was happening there?

WEINTRAUB: Well, actually I was fairly heavily involved. There was a term we used in the office, the countries of Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and a little bit of Cote d'Ivoire; they were called the “arc of crisis,” or the countries in crisis, kind of a subdivision of AF/W, if you will. And actually in fact that was my major mandate within the office — not so much Nigeria, Niger, and other countries in the region, but the focus on that mess there, because there were hundreds of thousands of refugees from both Liberia and Sierra Leone, first in each other's country, but also in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. And these are countries that could barely feed themselves, much less take care of scores if not hundreds of thousands of refugees. Obviously there was a lot of help, material resources from the UN High Commission for Refugees. But in those kind of environments, when the refugees might be in a camp, you have an environment where strangers in your country, refugee unfortunates who have been ejected from their own country or fled from their own country,

are housed in a camp and sheltered and fed by an international aid organization while you're in a village just down the road and you have to struggle just to feed your family.

I'm talking about some kind of a traditional agricultural system. This does not exactly engender feelings of hospitality toward these poor refugees, so there was a degree of instability, and not exactly the most welcoming environment for these refugees. Obviously, they would have preferred to have been back in their own country, but their own countries were going through horrific civil wars. So we had active refugee programs, with U.S. embassy refugee officers stationed in the area, and we had a program to handlwhere some of these people could be accepted into the United States. We also had to deal with people who had fled the fighting. We had large numbers of Liberians in Sierra Leone, Sierra Leoneans who were in the United States, people all mixed up everywhere. Some of them could apply for asylum if they ever got to the United States, and every year, I think it was, or every two years, their status had to be reviewed. That inevitably meant there was a lobbying group in Washington on their behalf, as the majority of these people wanted to stay in the United States. In this way, this fighting in that area also became a domestic issue in the United States, as well as a local problem where the conflict was located. That entire area was very unstable.

With the Liberians, we would often speak with elements in the U.S. of the rebel movement that was trying to overthrow Charles Taylor, this so-called LURD, L-U-R-D, Liberians United for Reconstruction and Development. This was an underground movement, and there were some Liberians in the United States who alleged that they were the official representatives of the LURD. They wanted to open a dialogue with us, and they would come in to the Department to speak to us. We would listen to them and hear what they had to say, but we certainly didn't use them as a conduit to get messages to anyone in the field. We worked through our ambassador in Monrovia or Freetown, as might be appropriate. Sometimes those ambassadors fielded phone calls from people alleging to be members or leaders of the LURD in the field; it was hard to know — sometimes they were, sometimes they weren't. So there was a lot going on, it was a real hornet's nest

of confusion in both Monrovia and in Freetown. I mean, in either country you couldn't go much out of town, the country was unstable to such a degree. The LURD was trying to press further and further into Monrovia, just as Charles Taylor had done in the early '90s when he eventually overthrew that government. There was a government in Sierra Leone, but they didn't have control over a lot of the country.

We were also trying to set up a new diamond trading regime to eliminate the smuggling of diamonds; apparently there was a lot of intelligence that diamonds were being smuggled out of Sierra Leone, used for arms and in fact maybe even used to fund some of the terrorism in the Middle East. So it was high profile activity. We worked a lot with countries like Belgium, where you have a big diamond market in Antwerp, to try and develop some kind of a diamond trading regime. The aim of the new regime would be to create a market where the only diamonds from Sierra Leone that the Antwerp diamond exchange would accept would be those that came through the official government diamond exchange, in order to eliminate the illicit trade in diamonds. Supposedly Charles Taylor, in order to fund his activities —he obviously didn't have much of a tax base in the country — was granting concessions to logging companies, allowing them to just destroy a lot of old growth lumber in Liberia and ship it out. Taylor allegedly got a percentage of everything, and apparently this was leading to massive erosion and depletion of resources; there was no replanting, it was kind of a clear cutting of forest.

So we were also trying to work with NGOs, a lot of the environmental NGOS, conservationist NGOs, to try and document who was involved. Taylor was also suspected of being involved in illicit diamond trading. Also, Liberia had a large shipping industry; Liberia for many years was known as a flag of convenience for the shipping industry and apparently we felt that Taylor also was milking that legitimate business in a way that was inappropriate to get resources. So we were trying to develop some kind of regime to get the Liberian government to agree to monitor its income from the shipping industry, from the licensing and shipping industry. So there were a lot of things going on, and all the while

we were paying attention to the growing numbers of refugees in Guinea, in Cote d'Ivoire. Those governments had a tough job of it to handle those people.

Q: Well during the time you were there, this is 2000 to 2002, was there any evacuation of our embassy?

WEINTRAUB: No, that had been done several times in the past, but not during the period I was in that office during those two years.

Q: I know, I mean, this went on so-

WEINTRAUB: Episodically throughout the '90s it had happened in both of the embassies. In Monrovia, Liberia, and Freetown, Sierra Leone, both of those posts had been evacuated, from Liberia to Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone to Liberia, both of them to Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire or to Dakar Senegal, or to Conakry, Guinea. Throughout the '90s there were several episodes of that nature, but both of them, of course, were high security posts, with no dependents.

Q: Did we sort of keep a helicopter carrier and a Marine contingent close by or?

WEINTRAUB: Oh sure, for a time and on an intermittent basis, but that was always a struggle. This was, I mean, particularly after September 11, 2001. This was not a high profile area for the military. I mean, it was my allegation that when a lot of this mess first occurred in the early '90s, before Charles Taylor consolidated his rule, if we would have had a helicopter carrier off the coast there, we could have put down that civil war in no time. But the U.S. government had decided not to intervene, and to take a hands-off policy. We did have, at one point, when it was convenient for the military, we had a unit there, a military unit just over the horizon, so to speak. The Liberians knew it was there, I guess occasionally helicopters would be seen; occasionally they might have brought in some supplies for the embassy. But this was - and obviously it was available for evacuation if need be. But it wasn't used for that purpose on our watch when I was there.

Q: How about dealing with Charles Taylor? I think he was under indictment in the United States, wasn't he? I mean, this was-

WEINTRAUB: He'd been an escaped felon from the United States, I think in the state of Massachusetts. The conviction was for some kind of embezzlement, I'm not sure what it was, but he was an escaped criminal. There was an indictment out for him, so obviously he would never have received an invitation from any level of government in the United States. As a matter of fact, I really wanted to get a trip back to Liberia to see a place where I served in the Peace Corps so many years earlier. But our bilateral relations were such that we weren't interested in sending a visitor even at the level I was to Liberia.

Q: Was there a feeling that if the forces against Taylor succeeded this would be better or were they all-

WEINTRAUB: That's a good point, that's a good point you raise. You know, some people were saying, after Taylor, then what? What do you replace that guy with? I mean, there was a lot of consideration given to this train of thought. I know there were some high profile visits, I think shortly before I came into the office, of Reverend Jackson -

Q: Jesse Jackson.

WEINTRAUB: Jesse Jackson had gone to Liberia. He paid a visit to the Liberians. Supposedly we were engaged in the negotiations that eventually cleared the way for the elections that Charles Taylor apparently fraudulently won. So there was kind of a kind of a sour feeling in the building that he was a rotten apple; perhaps in inadvertent ways we may have even contributed to his being there. We just didn't want to be involved - so it was just a negative approach to do anything with Charles Taylor. At the same time, we could not say with any confidence that there was any legitimate movement that would have been prepared to replace him. So as far as I know we certainly didn't do anything behind the scenes to bring about his downfall from government. But, you know, it did happen

eventually, shortly after I left, and he fled to his current exile in Nigeria. So, it wasn't just for the use of terminology that the area was called the arc of crisis. Both Liberia and Sierra Leone were in a constant state of disruption.

Q: Well, what about Cote d'Ivoire while you were onboard?

WEINTRAUB: Well, when I was onboard it was still reasonably stable. The founding president, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, had died a number of years ago; there were some problems with the elected government in power which was strongly favored by a different ethnic group than the Houphouet-Boigny government had been composed of for many years. Through no fault of its own, and also owing to the fact that there had been an electoral commission that we felt did not do a proper job — of vetting candidates for election, of deciding who would be allowed to vote and who would not be allowed to vote — the election that resulted in the government of President Gbagbo coming into power was in fact an uncontestedly flawed election. But it wasn't Gbagbo's fault, he didn't set the rules. It wasn't like he gerrymandered anything or he had his own electoral commission; it was a separate body before him that did that. But since it was obviously not considered to be a free and fair election, we were restricted by the amount of assistance we could offer them and what we could do with that government. Nevertheless he was governing in a reasonably democratic fashion. But those who had lost that election were obviously in no mood to be conciliatory because they felt they had been frozen out unfairly, as in fact they had been. So it was not the most stable of situations.

At this time, through this period, we had announced this new initiative, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, or AGOA, and we hoped the government of Cote d'Ivoire would be able to take advantage of it. It would allow the United States to open our markets, to get a lot of imports from Cote d'Ivoire — typically in the light manufacturing area, in textiles and everything of this nature. So, as a matter of fact, in January of 2002, I was a member of a fairly good-sized delegation that went to Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire for three to four days. We had the African specialist from the office of USTR, the U.S. Trade Representative. We had

our deputy assistant secretary for African Affairs from the State Department=. We had a senior official from the Department of Commerce, some other official from the Department of Labor. We also had people from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. We had a sizeable group of about eight people, I guess, and we were trying to see if we could nudge the Ivorians, if you will, over the hump, over the last of the remaining barriers that were keeping them from the potential gains available under AGOA. These barriers, or conditions, concerned, among other things, free operations of labor unions, what kind of a code they had in encouraging fair investor conditions, would the legal system be respected in case of there were breaches of contract or commercial disputes, and so on.

So this delegation went there in January 2002, and things were on track, but obviously this entire process was subject to negotiations, and eventual approval by the Senate, and the parliament in Cote d'Ivoire. I left that office in the summer of 2002, and things were somewhat on track, but I think it was in October or maybe November of that year, when a strong rebel movement emerged and I believe the country is still somewhat divided along a roughly horizontal line running roughly halfway through the country. The government itself was in control of the southern half of the country, where the government and population were predominantly Christian or pagan/ animists and the northern half was led by a predominantly Muslim movement. This was not exclusively so, but these two camps did have those general characteristics for the most part. And that's been going off and on since — there seems to be skirmishes every so often. I don't follow it actively, but every once in awhile something's in the newspaper about that. And so it's kind of a rough stalemate there. And that country had been for many years the stability, the anchor of stability in the region. For many years there had been large French investments in Cote d'Ivoire. There had not been a coup in Cote d'Ivoire all through the period of independence from 1960, while there had been coups in Ghana, in Nigeria, in Liberia, in Sierra Leone, in Guinea, in other countries, in Mali.

Q: Lots of French there.

WEINTRAUB: Yes, there were lots of French living there, many of them providing good expertise. In fact, they were probably getting fairly high subsidies from the French government to support — probably underwrite — the national budgets in support of the school system, the military; there were French armed forces stationed in several of the countries there. But even that system broke down eventually. You know, it was very unfortunate; this was our one, so to speak, anchor of stability. Just when Liberia or Sierra Leone are emerging, if you will, from their long nightmare of civil war, then we've got one starting in Cote d'Ivoire but at least it wasn't at the same time in Cote d'Ivoire as it was in Nigeria or somewhere else. So that was really sad and unfortunate.

Q: Well of your area, and maybe somebody else was more involved, but I take it Senegal was, again, a relatively peaceful place.

WEINTRAUB: Relatively stable. There had been a peaceful transfer of power. The founding president, Leopold Senghor, had eventually stepped down. There had been competitive elections and Senegal, I think, was just about the only country in the region where there had been a peaceful transfer of power from one political party to another. This hadn't happened for all the off-and-on elections in Nigeria; there'd never been a time when the party in power stepped down and a different political party took over. That had yet to happen in Nigeria; it still hasn't happened. In Senegal, Leopold Senghor was re-elected again the last time. But Senegal did have a peaceful change of power and they were contributing to the military forces that were being used in Sierra Leone or in Liberia.

In Mali, it was the same thing. The president of Mali at the time, I think, was also president of the Organization of African Unity. He had a visit to the White House, as his country was considered a regional anchor of stability, a democratically elected government, again after military rule. He had started to liberalize the economy, to open up free markets, and had taken some steps to loosen government control over the economy. So Mali, for awhile, was definitely in our good graces; I think it still is.

Niger was just struggling. It had a civilian elected government but not much in the way of resources at all. Not much.

Q: Chad was sort of in the same?

WEINTRAUB: Well, Chad again was AF/C, Central Africa.

Q: Oh, I see.

WEINTRAUB: Benin and Togo, also part of AF/W, were doing okay, but were kind of insignificant in the region, given their small size, population, and lack of significant resources. Burkina Faso, what used to be called Upper Volta — we were fairly certain was in bed with Mr. Taylor. And in fact, it may have supported the movement which eventually broke out in Cote d'Ivoire. We had our suspicions for many years about the government in Burkina Faso. And then there was the country of Mauritania, kind of a strange addition to the AF/W region.

Q: Yes, I would think it would go to North Africa.

WEINTRAUB: It sits well-

Q: Basically more, at least the rulers are-

WEINTRAUB: It is definitely more Arab, yes. And, in fact, like a number of other countries, it is called the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. But I guess the Africa Bureau wanted to hold on to as much as they could rather than give it up to the Near East Bureau.

Q: So it could have been one of these tribal battles.

WEINTRAUB: Yes. In fact, the southern half of the country is predominantly black African but I guess the elite class has long been Arab. Most of the people are Muslims, in fact. And Mauritania has been somewhat of an oddity in that at one point, I'm not sure just

when, but at one point they broke the Arab embargo and recognized Israel. So this was considered a feather in their cap and the U.S. liked that. So they would get a little higher profile on the Hill when it come time to give them an aid budget, and they might get a little more resources than they might otherwise get. And they didn't have a knee jerk reaction to follow the Arab line and the Third World line on a number of issues. But I think in the last year they suffered a military coup as well. But all told, not a great deal happens in these countries that affects you personally or that we need to be involved about. But they each have an American ambassador that needs to be tended to and needs to think that the sun rises and sets on his or her embassy and country.

There were some refugee criseactually, a number of various refugee crises with refugees escaping ships. I remember there was one where there was a refugee ship in waters off the West African coast; no one knew where it was for awhile. And then finally it was found. So I mean, there was more than enough to keep us busy considering what was going on elsewhere in South Africa, in Zaire, the aftermath of Rwanda, Angola and Mozambique, the civil war in southern Sudan, the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. I mean, we didn't have a lot of good news for the assistant secretary of state.

Q: Well then, you left that pleasure spot and where did you go? This would be your last story.

WEINTRAUB: Well, I have to admit, for those of us who have served in Africa, we think of ourselves as a special group. You know, it takes something to serve there. As much as I enjoyed working with the people in the region, the embassies of the region, I think the Africa bureau has a lot of people who do a lot of assignments in Africa. But, from one perspective, it got to be discouraging because there was hardly ever any good news coming out. So as much as I thought about upping for another tour, another assignment, and really getting a solid lock on what was happening, it just was very discouraging. So looking around then, and as you know, as people are bidding for their assignments, the bureaus of course are looking for people to fill assignments, someone had advised me

about an opening of something I wouldn't have considered otherwise in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, what people affectionately refer to as “drugs and thugs,” the INL Bureau.

This was in the year 2002. Eight or nine months after 9/11, we had obviously gone into Afghanistan not much later after that — I forget exactly when we went in, October maybe, and by this time we had brought about a certain amount of stability, we had an interim government in Afghanistan at the time under Mr. Karzai. And we were preparing to ramp up significantly the resources against drugs in Afghanistan. Afghanistan had been a traditional supplier of poppy, opium poppy for opium for heroin; most of it in fact had supplied the markets of Europe but it's a fungible kind of a commodity, so whatever wasn't used in Europe could come here. I think most of our heroin came from the Golden Triangle.

Q: Burma-

WEINTRAUB: Southeast Asia, right. But it was affecting our allies — the British, the Germans, the Dutch. A lot of their heroin, most of it, was coming from Afghanistan. And, you know, there was a job to do. So the INL bureau was going to get a large increase in resources, and they needed to ramp up the office that handled that part of the world. Obviously, the bulk of INL's drug fighting capacity was focused on Mexico and Colombia. The largest amount of resources, the largest amount of personnel, was fighting the battle in Mexico and Colombia — a little bit in Bolivia as well. INL, you know, practically had its own fleet of aircraft and of speedboats in the Caribbean. They worked heavily, of course, with the U.S. Coast Guard. So let that be on the record that that area was by far the larger battle.

As a result of that focus, virtually all the rest of the anti-narcotics battle, for all the rest of the globe I should say, was in this one other office; Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Far East. Basically we in this office had all the anti-drug programs in the rest of the

world. In Africa it was mostly the trade, not so much the production, but mostly trying to stop the trade and a lot of that was focused on both Nigeria and on Nigerians. Of course, a lot of Nigerians in the trade were not necessarily resident in Nigeria anymore; they're in South Africa or in fact in Southeast Asia as well. In Europe, there was hardly anything in the way of production, so we didn't have a lot of things going on in Europe, but we offered a certain amount to help to law enforcement agents. In Southeast Asia, we had heavy programs in Thailand. Obviously we couldn't do much in Burma since we had no decent relations with the government of Burma. We had some programs in the Middle East to help some governments. We also had a program in China, but by far the largest program in the region was in Afghanistan. And we had small but growing programs in Central Asia, the five central Asian former republics.

Q: The stans.

WEINTRAUB: The stans. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The five “stans.” And they were obviously the weak link in trafficking of Afghan drugs. The bulk of the drug products of Afghanistan was going out through Iran and Pakistan, no doubt about it, that was clear. The Iranians had a kind of a no-nonsense attitude toward interdiction, as far as we knew. It was our belief, much as we didn't get along with the Iranian government, certainly, that in fact the Iranians were doing what they could to stop it, to intercept it.

Q: Did we have any unofficial or side contact with the Iranian enforcement people?

WEINTRAUB: Not on a bilateral level, but we would meet with Iran and other countries at the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime in Vienna. Whenever that agency had meetings about Afghanistan, obviously Iran was right there. They have a large eastern border with Afghanistan, the western border of Afghanistan with Iran. And as a matter of fact, when I was in Geneva in the mid-'90s, working on a variety of UN bodies, if the Iranian delegate was there and we shared a concern about the budget, we could certainly

discuss multilateral issues with them. But obviously it was kind of verboten to discuss any attempt at bilateral issues. I believe that our friends in DEA, in the Drug Enforcement Administration, wanted very much to work with Iran. They thought this would really be essential and probably would be pretty exciting too. But obviously with Iranian support for terrorism, with Iran's foreign policy rabidly anti-Israel, with Iran's nuclear endeavors, we were in no mood to loosen the reins, if you will, on U.S. government officials to do anything with Iran in an official, bilateral way.

As a matter of fact, we had no problem with the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, UNODC, spending resources to help the Iranians; we had no problem with that. So, as Iran was trying to seal the Afghan border there on the west, we had large amounts of drugs going out through Pakistan on the south and east. And we were spending a lot of money with Pakistan after 9/11, with Musharraf's declaration with us in the war on terrorism. The U.S. military and the State Department and the Drug Enforcement Administration were doing a lot in Pakistan. So as it became more difficult to get the drugs out of Iran and through Pakistan, although still not grossly difficult, there was no doubt that the drug lords were taking the other route out through the north into Central Asia. They weren't going out eastward in the direction of China; that wasn't the market, but they would go up north, through the “stans,” through Central Asia into Russia, which was a market by itself, and then of course into Western Europe, into Turkey and then all over Western Europe.

So the “stans” had just gotten independence from the Soviet Union about 1990, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and they were, for the most part, run like “little Russias.” The people who had been in power under the old Communist regime suddenly became nationalists. They changed their name to some other kind of a political party ansurprise, surpristhey were elected leaders of the new governments. So these were for the most part pretty autocratic governments, pretty repressive governments, with the kind of law

enforcement system you would expect to have in those governments, not the kind that engenders a willingness to cooperate on the part of the population to help them.

The U.S. had bases in Uzbekistan to fight the war in Afghanistan and in the Kyrgyz Republic. Of course, Tajikistan was just emerging from a civil war so we didn't have anything there. But we had bases in the Kyrgyz Republic and in Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan was kind of out of bounds; we barely had a functioning embassy there. This was the guy, I forget his namTurkmenbashbut this guy really had a cult of personality much like our “friend” in North Korea. Supposedly — I never did get to Turkmenistan because the embassy did not go out of its way to welcome visitors — but supposedly in the capital there was a statue of the supreme leader, a gold plated statue that supposedly revolved around on a pedestal such that he was always facing the sun. I mean, this gives you an example. And he had something like a Qaddafi green book that he or his wife had written or prepared, and this volume was supposed to replace all the textbooks in school. So this was “Mr. Loony Tunes,” if you will. And he was just the worst of not a great lot.

The others in positions of authoritythey told us what we wanted to hear. Oh, they knew the importance of democracy, they knew the importance of opening their market, by all means, but Rome wasn't made in a day, you know. You Americans can't be impatient, you know, the people aren't used to it. It was the same story we heard for decades in other countries. But we did want to work with the law enforcement agencies to help intercept the flow of drugs which we knew were coming into Central Asia. And it was always a tradeoff, like all of foreign policy is. You want to accomplish something, but you don't want to, if you can help it, reinforce a police state or reinforce the autocratic elements of a state that was a police state and might not be one a few years later. You don't want to reinforce the wrong side of law and order. So we had to work very carefully, very gingerly, if you will, with the forces of law and order.

There were other elements in there; we had our human rights programs in there, funded by the human rights bureau, we had human rights programs funded by the Organization

for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), election monitoring, and other human rights programs. The European Union was doing programs there because the drugs that came through Central Asia and Russia, they were really destined for the countries of the European Union so they wanted to stop smuggling of drugs and also of people, they wanted to eliminate the illegal trafficking of persons, of prostitutes. They wanted to stop economic migrants. So the European Union was really a lot more interested in Central Asia than we were. Thein a manner of speakinwanted to push the wall protecting the EU back as far east as they could, so they were eager to work with the law enforcement people.

Q: What were you doing with this?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I was managing or overseeing our counter-narcotics programs in Afghanistan and Central Asia. We had a couple of people in Afghanistan who were funded by INL to run our extensive anti-narcotics programs in that country. In Central Asia, however, it was difficult because we were not using INL funding for those programs, we were using funding that came under what's called the Freedom Support Act. This was a large pot of money, as I understood it — and I'm not an expert in this. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, our Congress agreed to pump in large amounts of resources to Russia and the other constituent republics and the former Warsaw Pact nations, Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic states, — countries formerly behind the Iron Curtain. So, we were using Freedom Support Act funds, which was a large pot of money appropriated by the Congress. Basically, as I understood it, the intention was to centralize, in one spot in the State Department, responsibility for the allocation for these funds for strengthening democratic institutions in the former Soviet Union (FSU), and it was large amounts of money. The funds could be used for democratization, for strengthening labor unions, for agricultural development, for educational development, for law enforcement, for free elections; almost anything across the board. Rather than disperse it among a lot of different agencies, such as the Departments of Agriculture or Education, it was all given to the State Department. To manage the funds, within the European Affairs Bureau, the

Department created an office — I think it was slightly below the level of the assistant secretary, called the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia. They said, here's the money, you're the point man, you're responsible for it. Well, a lot of that money was farmed out to operating agencies. So USAID got some of the money, Department of Agriculture got some of the money, DEA got some of the money and some came to INL for anti-drug programs. So we spent, rather than spending INL-appropriated funds in Central Asia, as we did in Afghanistan, we spent these other Freedom Support Act Funds in Central Asia, to countries designated as members of the FSU.

Given all that background, we also were unclear how far we were going to go. I mean, unlike in Afghanistan or Thailand, where we knew this was going to be a long-range program — so INL put people in the embassies and supported people in the embassies — in Central Asia you did not have a cultivation problem and so we didn't know how long our programs were going to be operating there. We didn't know the long-range nature of the governments, how long we'd be able to work with those governments, how democratic they'd be, how repressive they'd be, or how cooperative they'd be. So we did not have INL people in any of those embassies in Central Asia. The way we'd have to do it was to have the ambassador, have the embassy assign one person to be the point person for INL-funded programs. It might have been a political officer, it might have been an admin officer, it might have been an economics officer, and that would be part of his or her portfolio.

In Uzbekistan, for example, DEA didn't have people but the Department of Justice had people. The Department of Justice had a whole series of programs on how to alter the legal system so it became much more analogous to a western legal system, if you will. So the Department of Justice had people there and they funded legal reform activities of the American Bar Association. There's a whole unit of funding from Freedom Support Act to Department of Justice to the ABA; they have a large element. DEA had people there as well, but DEA is mainly doing intelligence and operational-type activities with law enforcement, whereas our job in INL was not to get involved in operational activities

but to work with the law enforcement agencies, and to make sure they understood what the mission was and to help train them. So we ended up with some kind of support from other Americans in all the embassies. It might be in Uzbekistan from the Department of Justicthese folks could talk to people at senior levels in the ministry of justice. The DEA people could speak to operatives in the field when needed, but our element in INL was, you know, somewhere in between.

I mean, so some element of the U.S. government might be operating at all levels of law enforcement in certain selected countries — from the political level of the ministry to the bureaucratic level, and then to the operatives in the field. But it was very difficult. The programs were not huge by any means, but they were growing, and it was frequently the case that INL activities would be implemented when the designated person at the embassy had the time to do that. I'm sure that in most cases the ambassador had an agenda, and the embassy had an agenda for all these other elements of the mission program plan, and so it was really difficult. So in a way that was a bit frustrating. It never really got, I don't think, the amount of attention it deserved in Central Asia compared to South America, or compared to Afghanistan. As I said previously, it was not a problem of cultivation. It was the trade. Most of the product ended up in Europe, not in the United States, so it was hard to —

Q: Hard to find it.

WEINTRAUB: Hard to focus attention on that, but the stuff was coming out of Afghanistan and it was hard to find it and hard to track it.

Q: Now, turning briefly to Afghanistan, I have been part of a program of interviewing people who have come back from these, what they call PRT, Provincial-

WEINTRAUB: Reconstruction Teams.

Q: Reconstruction Teams. We have them out there; they're very much like the old CORDS program.

WEINTRAUB: Right, in Vietnam.

Q: And when I ask them about poppy cultivation, they say, well, basically it has a low priority because this is what, I mean, they're trying to establish a firm government, a viable economy and for many of the provinces this is what they do. And so at least the people I've talked to, and these are fairly recently out of there, they're not — they're kind of turning a blind eye. Some of them; some aren't.

WEINTRAUB: This was a sore point, all the time I was there, the much lower priority given it by the U.S. military forces in Afghanistan, compared to the embassy and certainly compared to INL. Supposedly, the U.S. government and the U.S. forces and the coalition forces in Afghanistan that fought and overthrew the Taliban, they relied on working with the so-called Northern Alliance forces in Afghanistan, they helped them to throw out the Taliban. Now, depending on the intelligence people you speak to and what you read, a lot of the commanders, these so-called war lords in the Northern Alliance, in fact also are drug lords. They control the borders leading into Central Asia, going into Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, and nothing gets out without them earning a profit on it — and that includes both licit exports and drugs as well. So you know, there is that factor that these were our original alliance partners to throw out the Taliban and the military, in all our discussions with them, and obviously we were in frequent discussions with them, never really did place a high priority on drugneither eradication nor interdiction.

I mean, I heard one military person say they don't want to antagonize the guy who's behind them, the guy who might be “watching his back.” And obviously the military, the U.S. military and the coalition forces, rely a lot on the members of the Northern Alliance to pave the way, to feed them intelligence. Obviously, the last thing they want to do is have these people call into question their alliance with the United States and other members

of the coalition. So the military was very hesitant to get into fighting drugs. It was always after some important event that the anti-drug campaign would begin in earnest: — Let's get the constitution done and then maybe we can do it. And then, well now we've got the next election, let's wait for the next election, the presidential election. And now, well now we've got the parliamentary election. It seems there's always another event that they have to wait for. We at State Department, we tried to push them a lot but the military — the resources of State Department compared to the resources of the military are obviously not comparable, one might say.

And I remember, I think it was January '04, maybe January '03, I remember in the morning while I was getting dressed to come into work I had the radio on, and I was listening to national public radio. They had an interview with a soldier out in the field in Afghanistan, somewhere at some kind of a roadblock, and they were checking for weapons. They were checking vehicles for weapons, and I guess the interviewer asked the soldier, well, you hear a lot about drugs. What are you supposed to do, or what do you do if you find drugs, something like that. I forget his exact words, of course, but it was something like that. And the soldier said, “Drugs? Oh, that's not my job. We've got enough on our hands to worry about the weapons.” So even though the military often mouthed the right words — the senior levels at the official level never said “That's not my job,” they always said “That's not my job right now.” And, by the way, if we come across it we'll stop it, but we're sure not going to go out of our way. And here was a guy who in fact did come across it and still didn't do anything about it. So this went on and on and on. And you know, probably it hasn't been resolved yet. It was still continuing when I left — about what is the military going to do about drug smuggling.

So when I was in INL we started a large — well, maybe moderate — scale eradication program, applying this program not through use of herbicides, not through use of spraying, but through the process of physically uprooting the plants or slashing them with machetes. This was a huge endeavor, obviously very labor intensive. We hired a contractor and the contractor had to rely upon the Afghan military to secure a perimeter of a certain location.

They would map out different areas for such activity — we worked a lot with the British on this process. Under the agreement of the interim government after the overthrow of the Taliban, among all the coalition, different members of the coalition assumed different responsibilities. The U.S. was primarily involved in training the military. The British were in counter-narcotics. The Italians were in setting up a judicial system, the Germans a police department. The Japanese were to help in demobilization of the military and getting the soldiers back into civilian life. All members of the coalition had something special to accomplish. And our people worked very closely with the British, who had the lead on drugs.

The British, with the Afghans and intelligence agents, they would pick areas that would be a target for eradication. A contractor, working with the Afghan military, would go in to secure an area, put a perimeter around an area so targeted. Then, through the use of police and hired labor — depending on the region it might be local hired labor, it might be outside labor — they'd go in that area and within a day or a couple of days they would hit the fields that were targeted. This was just getting started in 2004, in early 2004. They would eradicate in that area and then they would retreat and then they'd hit another area of about similar size; they would plan another raid in the area. But it was all we could do to convince the military to feed us intelligence. When they're fighting people in the hills, wherever they fought, they often did come upon some caches of drugs, but they were supposed to report it, make sure where it was, investigate it. But we were advised in no uncertain terms that this was not their priority - their priority was hunting the bad guys, hunting the terrorists in the mountains. So, I mean, there was - I don't know if a “disconnect” is the right word, but we were not pulling in the same direction, there's no doubt about it.

Q: Well Leon, I'm looking at the time now.

WEINTRAUB: I'm okay, I'm okay for- I have another half hour.

Q: Well, I really am not. I was wondering, shall we- what were you doing? Were you- is there anything we really should cover or?

WEINTRAUB: Well, basically I was the manager, the Washington, D.C. manager and supervisor of the people in the field doing our INL programs in Afghanistan and Central Asia. In the summer of 2004, kind of in my last months on active duty, I even had a chance to go to Kabul for a couple of weeks. As the program was being expanded, geared up — just at that time, one of our persons at the embassy was getting ready to transfer, another was going on home leave, someone was doing something else, and our ambassador — who's now our ambassador in Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad — was getting annoyed that here we were ramping up our INL program and there's nobody around to do it: to work with the contractor, to work with the ministry of agriculture, to work with the anti-narcotics police, and to work with our British and other allies. So it was only going to be for a period of two weeks to fill a gap, and it was fairly obvious you're not going to send someone who's not familiar with the program. So you're in a meeting, and people are looking around and saying, who can we send there for two weeks who really knows the program and will not need a long “break-in” period? And it was kind of obvious that, yes, I knew the program. So I got a little two week visit to Kabul, and I had a chance to attend some senior level meetings with — actually with the president of Afghanistan, who just so happened to convene a high level meeting about what to do about drugs while I was there.

Unfortunately, at the end of the year of '04, the reports came out in fact that opium production expanded again, considerably. But as a matter of fact just about a month ago there was the latest report — these are estimates put out by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) — that in fact there had been a decline in cultivation, a significant decline, about 15 or 20 percent in the acreage identified as under poppy cultivation. It is unclear, of course, how accurate those reports can be, but there was apparently only a very small decrease in the actual output, only like a two percent decline, and this was apparently because the weather conditions were so very highly favorable; the amount of rainfall, the

amount of moisture. So even though you cut back the area under cultivation by 15 to 20 percent, in fact the output only fell by about two percent.

So, overall, it looks like a moderate success story, probably due in some part to our efforts but it is still a long way from being out of danger of becoming a so-called narco state. You simply don't have the elements conducive for free markets for trade in agriculture, for trade in cotton or corn or whatever crops there might be. Roads have to be rebuilt, bridges have to be rebuilt, and markets have to be rebuilt. And it's easy to grow a crop when someone brings you the seeds, as the poppy traders do — someone who will give you an advance, someone will come to your field and pick up the harvest from you. You don't even have to take it to market and wonder, “Is the price, when I'm ready to sell it, going to be as good as it was when I planted it?” You know, a price is negotiated beforehand with the drug dealers.

So, it's a tough sell and it's still an uphill battle as far as I can tell, but for me it was an exciting part of the world, I hadn't been there before. I made a few trips out to Central Asia, and I also went to Afghanistan. I worked with different people, and got involved with a different approach to foreign policy. So again, it's kind of emblematic of the type of a career I've had in the Foreign Service. I served in different regional bureaus — a number of geographical bureaus, as well as different functional bureaus; I covered quite a range, from human rights to law enforcement. So it was fine.

Q: Well great. Well Leon, by the way, you will have a chance to expand on this. You might want to talk more about your time in Afghanistan and anything else such as that and some of the other places in this. But I want to thank you very much.

WEINTRAUB: Well thank you very much.

End of interview